



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Country Strategy Evaluation: **Republic of Korea 2021-2024**



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
APAC	Asia-Pacific
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CIDC	Committee of International Development Cooperation
CO	Country Office
COMPASS	UNHCR's New Results-Based Management software
CSE	Country Strategy Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DER	Division of External Relations
DIP	Division of International Protection
DRRM	Donor Relations and Resource Mobilisation Service
DRTV	Direct Response TV
DSPR	Division of Strategic Planning and Results
ESG	Environmental, Social, Governance
ER	External Relations
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
F2F	Face to Face
GCS	Global Communications Service
GIK	Gifts In Kind
GIW	Gift in Will
GNI	Gross National Income
GPC	Global Protection Cluster
GRF	Global Refugee Forum
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
HNWI	High Net Worth Individuals
HQ	Headquarters
IFL	International Fundraising Leadership Forum
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IG	Individual Giving
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KBA	Korean Bar Association
KCOC	Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation
KCRP	Korea Conference of Religion for Peace
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KORRIN	Korean Refugee Rights Network
KRW	Korean Won
LC	Local Currency
LTV	Lifetime Value

MAP	Migration to Asia Peace
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MYS	Multi-Year Strategy
NAP	National Partner Association
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHRCK	National Human Rights Commission of Korea
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OL	Operating Level
OO	One-Off donors
OP	Operations Plan
PI	Public Information
PPH	Private Partnerships and Philanthropy
PSP	Private Sector Partnerships
RAD	Refugee Appeal Division of the Ministry of Justice
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RoI	Return on Investment
RoK	Republic of Korea
RPD	Refugee Policy Division of the Ministry of Justice
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UBR	Universal Birth Registration
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency (for Palestinian refugees)
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

READING NOTES

In the Republic of Korea, populations served by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are typically referred to using terms such as:

- **난민 (Nanmin):** This translates to "refugees" and is used to describe individuals recognised under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the domestic Refugee Act. **난민 신청자 (Nanmin Sincheongja):** Meaning "asylum - seekers," referring to those who have applied for refugee status but are awaiting a decision. However, it is important to note that the scope of the group recognised under domestic laws is narrower than that used by UNHCR, i.e. asylum-seekers given decisions of non-referral to Refugee Status Determination (RSD) are not categorised as 난민신청자. **인도적 체류자 (Indojeok Cheryuja):** Refers to "humanitarian status holders," a designation for individuals not recognised as refugees but allowed to stay in the Republic of Korea for humanitarian reasons. **무국적자 (Mugukjeokja):** This term means "stateless persons" and describes those without any nationality.

These terms mostly align with UNHCR's categorisation of the populations it serves, but their use may vary depending on context, such as media, legal, or social discussions in the Republic of Korea.

A note on partnerships: In general, the reference to UNHCR in the text also includes partner organisations and allies that play a strategic and key role in the deployment of programmes and actions on behalf of the forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The systematic use of the term "UNHCR and partners" has been avoided for ease of reading.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and methodology

This Country Strategy Evaluation (CSE), commissioned by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) and the Representation in the Republic of Korea, aimed to inform the next Multi-Year Strategy (2026 onward) and extract lessons relevant to the wider region. Although the MYS was submitted during the evaluation and funding conditions tightened, the evaluation remains timely—offering a baseline and practical guidance for sustaining protection outcomes and mobilising resources in a constrained environment. The primary users are UNHCR Korea and RBAP, with additional relevance for UNHCR Headquarters and key national partners. The CSE covered 2022–2024 and was implemented between November 2024 and September 2025, including fieldwork in February–March 2025. Evaluation efforts unfolded amid significant global budget cuts and shifts in the Republic of Korea's Official Development Assistance and humanitarian policies, which affected the prioritisation and usability of some recommendations.

The evaluation assessed UNHCR Korea's performance in partnerships and resource mobilisation—framed by the 2023–2025 Multi-Year Strategy (MYS) and the 2021–2025 Private Sector Partnerships (PSP) Strategy—and secondarily examined domestic protection, awareness-raising, and localisation efforts. Using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) criteria and a theory-based approach, the evaluation applied a retrospectively developed Theory of Change and matrix of key questions, with particular focus on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Gender and coherence were excluded per the Terms of Reference.

A mixed-methods design enabled triangulation through a review of 166 documents, 44 interviews with 53 informants (47% women), staff discussions, two case studies and the analysis of UNHCR datasets (budget, staffing, PSP). Analytical tools included qualitative coding of 1,580 interview text fragments using Atlas.ti, as well as thematic and narrative analysis, and co-occurrence visualisation.

Ethical safeguards included informed consent, anonymity, and conflict-of-interest management. A validation workshop helped refine findings and ensure relevance for UNHCR Korea, RBAP, and headquarter units.

Findings

Protection strategy fit to the Republic of Korea's context (Relevance)

UNHCR Korea's protection strategy is closely attuned to the Republic of Korea's legal framework, complex political dynamics, and evolving public attitudes toward refugees and asylum-seekers. It is explicitly designed to bridge the gap between international standards and domestic constraints within a national protection environment that only partially aligns with international norms and often prioritises border control over international protection. The relevance of UNHCR's country strategy is demonstrated by responsiveness to progressive developments—such as the 2022 regularisation policy for undocumented children—as well as persistent challenges, including limited access to territory. UNHCR's legal and advocacy efforts, notably targeted legislative submissions and capacity-building, are tailored to the Republic of Korea's decision-making processes and to gaps in the implementation of the Refugee Act.

Socially and politically, the strategy deliberately addresses public and political hesitancy around refugee protection. UNHCR has built a broad coalition—including civil society organisations, members of the National Assembly, progressive political actors, and private-sector allies—to support systemic reform and public awareness. In a culturally homogeneous context with limited prior experience of welcoming refugees, communication efforts that humanise refugees have been especially pertinent to shifting perceptions.

Fundraising strategy fit to the Republic of Korea's funding environment (Relevance)

UNHCR aligned its public-funding approach with the Government of the Republic of Korea's development and foreign-policy priorities—most notably those in the Third Strategic Plan for Development Cooperation (2021–2025)—which contributed to higher income for UNHCR and enabled longer-term programming partnerships, including a significant Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) – UNHCR Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Despite this progress, UNHCR's share of the Republic of Korea's government funding remains below that of other major United Nations (UN) agencies, indicating the need for closer alignment with Korea's strategic interests and more proactive engagement. At the same time, stronger emphasis by national institutions on results-based management and accountability—evidenced by KOICA's detailed reporting expectations and cost-efficiency norms—has tested UNHCR's ability, as a global agency, to adapt to local requirements.

In the private sector, UNHCR Korea's investment in Individual Giving (IG) has been broadly appropriate to market conditions—leveraging high internet penetration, a cultural inclination toward charitable giving, and the strategic benefits of unrestricted funds—with timely shifts to digital acquisition and engagement in the post-COVID-19 “un-tact” context. Nonetheless, IG income has stagnated amid donor fatigue and demographic change, underscoring the need for innovation and diversification, particularly in the Private Partnerships and Philanthropy (PPH) segment, which did not exceed 8.5% of private-sector income from 2022 to 2024. Partnerships with faith-based organisations have been relevant and values-aligned, while expanding corporate engagement has proven difficult due to differing domestic giving priorities. Communication efforts to date have had limited resonance, pointing to the need for more emotionally compelling, locally tailored messaging.

Efficient use of resources for protection and fundraising results (Efficiency)

UNHCR Korea has operated with notable efficiency in a constrained environment, leveraging limited resources to address contextual challenges in protection service delivery, sustain donor engagement, and build institutional partnerships. Lean staffing, institutional continuity, and strong local knowledge have supported operational stability. At the same time, several factors have constrained agility and responsiveness to advocacy and resource mobilisation opportunities—most notably staffing gaps, reliance on interns (23% of the CO workforce), and delays linked to organisational validation processes.

Programmatically, a high proportion of unearmarked funding has enhanced flexibility; the allocation of 76% of the budget to STAFF¹ and ABOD² is not aligned with recommended corporate ratios; however, it reflects UNHCR Korea's strategic emphasis on advocacy rather than direct service delivery or operational programming. Legal support from the Regional Bureau and Headquarters has been consistently effective. Regional resources—such as the Regional Training Centre in Bangkok and targeted cooperation on Refugee Status Determination (RSD) training—have also contributed meaningfully to knowledge exchange and capacity-building. Coordination between External Relations (ER) and Private Sector Partnerships (PSP) has improved but remains siloed at the strategic-planning level, limiting integrated donor engagement. In addition, capacity shortfalls in the Private Partnerships and Philanthropy (PPH) team and outreach workload bottlenecks have constrained the full realisation of fundraising objectives.

Organisational agility in partnerships and resource mobilisation and risk / opportunity response (Efficiency)

¹ The STAFF category covers the salaries, benefits and entitlements of the regular UNHCR national and international positions.

² The administrative budget obligation document (ABOD) category represents the total administrative non-staff costs for each office, regional bureau and headquarters Division or entity. It is divided into chapters of expenditures. Examples of chapters include, but are not limited to, staff travel, training, cost of office premises.

UNHCR Korea's institutional arrangements have shown adaptive capacity to emerging opportunities and risks in partnerships and resource mobilisation. Senior-level engagement has been effective during periods of political transition, notably in re-establishing key legislative relationships. Operational flexibility—including reallocating budgets from face-to-face to digital channels and submitting earmarked proposals tailored to donor preferences—has supported timely pivots. During the Ukraine crisis, UNHCR was the first organisation to launch a campaign in the Republic of Korea, achieving strong digital fundraising results. However, such agility has been episodic rather than routine; bureaucratic processes, delayed donor reporting, limitations in budget monitoring, and insufficient working-level dialogue have collectively constrained the organisation's ability to fully leverage shifting political contexts.

Internally, systems such as COMPASS have enabled structured partnership management aligned with UNHCR's results-based framework, yet gaps in documentation, data completeness, and timeliness persist. PSP analyses, donor-perception surveys, and communication strategies have informed planning, but corporate platforms (e.g. SYNERGY, WORKDAY) have added complexity, impeding recruitment agility in competitive markets for PSP professionals. Even so, the ability to reallocate funds and to propose earmarked PPH projects has improved adaptability. UNHCR has also deepened civil-society partnerships, leveraging national platforms (e.g. Korean Refugee Film Festival, Korea Refugee Rights Network - KRRN) to mobilise resources and enhance public visibility.

Support to national asylum and protection systems (Effectiveness)

UNHCR Korea has played a constructive role in supporting government and civil society to strengthen the national asylum system and protection framework. Its contributions have included technical advice on legislative reform, participation in strategic litigation through amicus curiae submissions, and advocacy for closer alignment with international standards. These efforts informed revisions to proposed amendments of the Refugee Act and Immigration Act—particularly on detention policy and provisions concerning “manifestly unfounded claims.” UNHCR has also reinforced refugee resettlement mechanisms and fostered institutional learning via training for Ministry of Justice officials and the judiciary, alongside the co-publication of the *Refugee Dictionary*. Notably, UNHCR helped establish the Republic of Korea's first refugee research network, anchoring refugee discourse within national academic settings. Civil society partnerships have expanded access to legal and psychosocial services, while pilot initiatives in health and higher education have begun to address integration needs and vulnerabilities.

At the same time, the effectiveness of these efforts has been constrained by systemic factors. Official statistics indicate a low refugee recognition rate of 2.7%, and the predominant use of humanitarian status continues to limit access to full refugee status and other international protection pathways. Access to justice remains difficult due to a shortage of specialised lawyers, legal costs, and administrative barriers in areas such as family reunification and statelessness. Although UNHCR has partially mitigated these challenges, systemic constraints—including the low institutional prioritisation of refugee issues, public scepticism toward reception, and the absence of anti-discrimination legislation—continue to impede progress. These limitations have been consistently flagged in UNHCR's formal legal observations on national legislation.

Strategic positioning to secure funding across government, civil society and private sector (Effectiveness)

UNHCR Korea is widely regarded by government actors as a credible, principled partner whose mandate and professionalism align with the Republic of Korea's international development and humanitarian agenda. This credibility is reflected in the sharp increase in public funding to UNHCR—from US\$24 million in 2023 to US\$66.7 million in 2024—signalling growing governmental confidence in UNHCR's capacity to deliver needs-based assistance worldwide. UNHCR's rapid crisis response, notably in Ukraine, further reinforced its profile and strategic leverage for securing funds. Its unique protection mandate and leadership within the Global Protection Cluster continue to underpin relevance to the Republic of Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA) objectives.

Engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) and public administrations has expanded through UNHCR’s training in legal aid and programmatic support, strengthening national capacities and consolidating UNHCR’s normative role in refugee protection. UNHCR has developed a modest but effective network across academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and researchers, and has used targeted public events to shape national discourse. However, overall civil society engagement remains limited—particularly in grassroots mobilisation and localised training—and underinvestment in media outreach, together with underuse of influential public figures, has constrained advocacy reach and broader societal support for refugee issues.

In the private sector, UNHCR Korea has achieved notable success at mobilising flexible (unearmarked) funding, which accounted for over 80% of PSP income during 2021–2024. Yet overall private revenue has declined—from US\$49 million (2022) to US\$42 million (2024)—driven by falls in both One-Off (OO) and committed giving. The PPH segment remains underdeveloped, comprising 3.3% of 2024 revenue—well below regional (16%) and global (37%) benchmarks—and the donor base among high-net-worth individuals is narrow despite the Republic of Korea’s wealth. Reduced acquisition investment amid rising competition, together with limited digital fundraising capacity, has impeded donor growth and sustainability. While return on investment has been maintained through cost containment, this has come at the expense of long-term growth.

Contribution of policy / legal work to durable protection outcomes (Sustainability)

UNHCR’s supervisory mandate—explicitly recognised in the Refugee Act—has provided the basis for high-level policy dialogue, legal advocacy, and technical support aimed at strengthening protection standards and the functioning of the national asylum system. While the Refugee Act was a landmark achievement as Asia’s first standalone refugee law, its implementation has been uneven, and its full potential to drive more ambitious and sustainable protection reforms has yet to be realised. Through policy and legal engagement, UNHCR has contributed to steady, system-level improvements, including training for officials, initiatives to enhance RSD quality, and formalised consultations with adjudicating bodies. The legal anchoring of resettlement mechanisms, combined with partnerships with civil society, has expanded legal representation and enabled strategic litigation that has produced durable reforms (e.g. detention conditions). Nonetheless, enduring structural constraints restrict the long-term sustainability of these gains.

Sustained public and private support to UNHCR (Sustainability)

UNHCR Korea has pursued a multi-pronged pathway to sustain public and private support for resource mobilisation. On the public side, accumulated trust and policy dialogue have positioned UNHCR as a key partner in the Republic of Korea’s ODA priorities, including the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. The 2024 MoU with KOICA institutionalises multi-year cooperation—projected at US\$7–10 million annually—and aligns with the Republic of Korea’s Grand Bargain pledges to expand flexible contributions. High-level advocacy platforms, such as the Global Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Forum engaging 29 Members of the National Assembly, further strengthen visibility and policy influence. These mechanisms are reinforced by the Republic of Korea’s expanding humanitarian commitments, with UNHCR among the top five UN agency partners.

In the private sector, long-term sustainability has been advanced through donor diversification and enhanced engagement. By end-2024, UNHCR Korea counted 241,198 individual donors, 86% of whom were regular givers—providing predictable income. Planned investments underscore a retention and value-growth focus: roughly 30% higher donor-care spending and >82% growth in upgrade and Middle-Value initiatives in 2025. Parallel efforts to cultivate high-potential corporate and faith-based partners aim to convert value alignment and public reach into durable support. Nonetheless, gaps remain: private sector priorities are not always aligned with UNHCR’s mandate, and legacy giving is underdeveloped. While “Gift in Will” (GiW) shows potential amid intergenerational wealth transfer, tax ineligibility and low public awareness currently limit maturation.

Conclusions

Strategic Dimension

C1) Positioning – UNHCR has developed a strategic and expanding—yet primarily transactional—partnership with the Republic of Korea to support its global protection mandate, while facing structural barriers that limit progress in advancing international protection standards and broader compliance with international law and protection standards.

Operational Dimension

C2) Protection ecosystem and localisation — UNHCR has played a pivotal role in fostering an ecosystem of national organisations working on asylum and international protection, creating greater capacity for analysis, advocacy, and assistance, and laying the foundation for advancing localisation.

C3) Legal influence and protection environment — Despite a modest operational footprint, UNHCR Korea has materially broadened the protection environment by helping to establish protection jurisprudence, embed procedural safeguards, and promote rights-based practices, even amid persistent gaps and risks of regression.

C4) PSP performance – UNHCR’s limited capacity to scale investment in the increasingly competitive Republic of Korea market has exposed a persistent gap between market potential and strategic execution, leading to stagnating private-sector income.

C5) PSP sustainability — UNHCR Korea’s substantial base of private donors, supported by strong public-sector engagement, provides a solid platform for sustaining future income. However, the strategy faces growing risks due to rising donor attrition and limited investment in donor retention.

C6) Public funding strategy — Government recognition of UNHCR’s role within the Republic of Korea’s humanitarian priorities have contributed to a sharp increase in government contributions. However, UNHCR Korea’s ability to fully leverage funding and partnership opportunities with government actors has been constrained by limited thematic alignment—particularly in emerging areas such as climate action—alongside modest donor visibility and accountability gaps.

C7) Communication and public engagement – The reach and emotional resonance of UNHCR Korea’s communication efforts to humanise refugees and highlight their potential societal contributions have remained limited, largely due to challenges inherent in the socio-cultural and political landscape.

Organisational Dimension

C8) Internal coordination — Coordination between the Country Office (CO) and the Private Sector Partnerships (PSP) team has notably improved but certain shortcomings have affected the coherence and overall effectiveness of the CO’s engagement with external audiences.

C9) Organisational model — UNHCR’s presence in the Republic of Korea is primarily driven by the need to mobilise resources and leverage the Republic of Korea’s growing international influence. While the current model integrates PSP functions within a Country Office structure, it reflects an intermediary configuration—neither a “traditional” CO nor a fully scaled PSP operation optimised for competitive fundraising.

Recommendations

R1) DONOR CENTRICITY - Be more “donor and partner” centric by: enhancing the level of CO-level led services vis-à-vis public donors in the Republic of Korea; increasing the level of UNHCR engagement

vis-à-vis Korean public donors based outside the Republic of Korea; and reinforcing relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) that support it as an international player vis-à-vis forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

R2) Advocacy - Broaden advocacy beyond government engagement and strengthen it through evidence use and joint positioning with partners by: developing a multi-level advocacy strategy that goes beyond MoFA and KOICA to engage a broader range of institutional allies. Strengthen evidence-based advocacy with MoFA through targeted policy briefs and impact-driven materials aligned with the Republic of Korea's ODA priorities, while linking efforts to global commitments to elevate the Republic of Korea's leadership profile³. Foster joint platforms with CSOs, academia, and private actors to broaden social support for refugee protection.

R3) PSP - Ensure the growth of PSP income, with IG and a significantly larger proportion of income derived from PPH by: strengthening the digital acquisition programme and multichannel approach together with a strong conversion programme and investing in tailored retention strategies—particularly for One-Off donors—through segmented, donor-centric engagement. Elevate High Net Worth Individuals (HNWI) giving and GiW as strategic priorities. Maintain strong investment in Face-to-Face (F2F) fundraising, explore innovative and culturally relevant engagement models, and draw on global good practices from other UNHCR offices.

R4) Optimise PPH set-up and enhance PPH skills by: establishing a mentorship arrangement with a senior PPH manager from another UNHCR office; refining the organisational set-up; building ongoing prospect research capacity; enhancing staff skills in networking and sales.

R5) COMMUNICATION - More actively leverage the existing resources and multiplier power of other stakeholders, in particular to amplify positive stories to change the public sentiment towards refugees into empathy by: adopting an audience-centric approach to highlight the Republic of Korea's contributions, collaborating with media, influencers, and K-culture partners, and tailoring campaigns with human stories that resonate with Korean cultural narratives. Strengthen segmentation of target audiences for both communication and PSP, and pursue creative, cost-effective strategies—such as pro bono partnerships and high-visibility events—to expand reach and impact despite budget constraints.

R6) PARTNERSHIPS - Establish additional multi-year and high value corporate partnerships by: cultivating existing partnerships for identification of new opportunities; tailoring multi-year packages for support from companies whose profiles best align with UNHCR's values and activities; and leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) priorities to develop cause-related marketing initiatives with corporate partners.

R7) JOINT PLANNING - Develop cross-cutting strategic and operational planning capacity by: aligning planning cycles between CO and PSP; PSP working closely with CO to identify PSP funding opportunities; building project task forces, pool expertise and ideas to address key issues and design most effective engagement plans with the various stakeholders; and reinforcing strategic planning skills for better and shared identification of priorities.

R8) ORGANISATIONAL MODEL - To gain in agility and networking capacity, and explore efficiency gains, assess the possibility to create a National Partner Association (NAP) in the Republic of Korea by: comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the National Association Partner model in other countries; analysing the existing conditions in the Republic of Korea and the feasibility of establishing a National Partner Association; and consulting with partners, civil society organisations, and academic institutions to assess their capacity and willingness to participate in alternative models of partnership.

³ At the time of writing this report, shifts are taking place in the Republic of Korea's Official Development Assistance and humanitarian policies that may affect priorities and budget allocations as they were envisaged and communicated to the evaluation at the beginning of 2025.

R9) ASYLUM SYSTEM - Continue strengthening the national asylum system and improving refugee protection by complementing advocacy with broader stakeholder engagement and targeted capacity-building efforts. Advance legal reform by engaging progressive legislators and aligned ministries with curated data, case studies, and international best practices. Increase intentional learning from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that support both domestic and global activities, and increase participation in regional capacity-building through UNHCR training facilitators. Support quality assurance by piloting light-touch reviews of RSD decisions and procedures to generate evidence for policy dialogue and system improvements.

1 INTRODUCTION

1. Though the funding background has changed considerably⁴ since UNHCR constructed the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this evaluation and the Multi-Year Strategy (MYS) has already been submitted, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) and the Representation of the Republic of Korea (hereinafter UNHCR Korea) originally requested a Country Strategy Evaluation (CSE) to inform UNHCR Korea's next MYS cycle, set to commence in 2026—and to provide lessons and good practices for similar offices in the region. The evaluation aims to provide to provide a baseline for the new management team and recommendations to ensure the sustainability and impact of UNHCR's efforts in the Republic of Korea and globally.
2. This evaluation was conducted between November 2024 and September 2025, with fieldwork being conducted in February and March 2025. The evaluation period was characterised by internal reforms within UNHCR involving: i) a change in the structure and approach to strategic planning, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees; ii) the process of regionalisation and decentralisation, to strengthen national operations through increased responsibilities and capacities; iii) the development of multi-year strategies at the national level.
3. The conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation of UNHCR's Country Strategy in the Republic of Korea were originally intended to serve as a basis for the planning of the upcoming MYS; however, as the MYS has already been submitted, the evaluation will provide valuable insights that will enhance UNHCR Korea's ability to safeguard protection and mobilise resources in the new, austerity-driven and politically constrained environment marked by reduced funding, shifts in the Republic of Korea's Official Development Assistance and humanitarian policies, weakened multilateral support, and increased pressure to align with donor domestic agendas.
4. The primary audiences for this evaluation are the UNHCR Korea office and the RBAP. Secondary users include UNHCR headquarters (e.g. Division of External Relations (DER), Private Sector Partnerships (PSP), Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR), Global Communications Service (GCS), Donor Relations and Resource Mobilisation Service (DRRM) and the Government of the Republic of Korea (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK). The primary audiences are expected to use the evaluation findings and recommendations to inform strategic decision-making, improve operational effectiveness, and enhance coordination efforts. Secondary stakeholders will leverage these insights to guide policy formulation, strengthen partnerships, and optimise resource mobilisation and advocacy activities.

⁴The new US administration significantly reduced foreign aid funding, redirected priorities and curtailed USAID's global development role.

2 CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF UNHCR OPERATION

2.1 UNHCR Current Global Background

5. According to UNHCR's Global Trends report, at the end of 2024, 123.2 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order.⁵ This projection reflected an increase of 16.16% between 2022 and 2024 (UNHCR, 2024b):⁶ calculations for the needed final budget reached \$10,785.4 million. However, the most recent update (February 2025) indicates that there was a financing gap of 51.6% in 2024, compared to 47.7% in 2023 (UNHCR and Division of Strategic Planning and Results, 2025).⁷ According to UNHCR data, by 2025, population trends indicate that there will be an additional 9 million forcibly displaced and stateless people globally in need of care, while the budget needed will be \$10.248 billion (UNHCR, 2025). The concurrent rise in protracted emergencies (e.g. Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza, Myanmar, DRC) has intensified pressure on UNHCR's overstretched operations, further highlighting the risks posed by heavy reliance on tightly earmarked contributions and a narrow donor base.⁸

2.1.1 UNHCR's global strategy for fundraising and PSP

6. UNHCR established three strategies to guide resource mobilisation and partnership processes in its operations: the Global Communications Strategy 2019, the UNHCR Strategic Framework for Private Sector Fundraising and Partnerships (2018-2025), and the Division of External Relations Strategy 2023-2024. All these initiatives aim to diversify their income sources, which traditionally relied on government contributions, increase the commitment of civil society through increased individual donations, and strengthen alliances with the private sector, ensuring that its involvement goes beyond the economic contribution and that it is involved in the local integration and capacity building of the refugee population.
7. The UNHCR's Strategic Framework for Private Sector Fundraising and Partnerships (2018–2025) set a target of raising US\$1 billion in financial contributions from the private sector each year by 2025. From this perspective, UNHCR aims to mobilise 25 million supporters worldwide to raise \$700 million through more than 5 million donors.

2.2 Regional Context (2021-2024)

8. RBAP covers 45 countries and territories, including 31 states, with 15 country offices (CO), three multinational offices in Australia, Kazakhstan, and Thailand, and five States under its direct supervision. This region is home to approximately 14.3 million people of concern to the UNHCR. However, crises in 2021, such as the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan and the military coup in Myanmar, contributed to the rise in the number of refugees in this area. In Asia and the Pacific, the number of refugees grew from 4.2 million in 2021 to 6.8 million at the end of 2022, representing nearly 20% of the global total. As

⁵ UNHCR. (2025) Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2024. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2024> (accessed 1 July 2025).

⁶ The total of 130.8 million forcibly displaced or stateless persons in 2024 was distributed as follows: 32,574,812 refugees (25% of the total), 6,978,314 asylum-seekers (5%), 62,960,690 internally displaced persons (48%), 4,698,765 persons under UNHCR's stateless mandate (4%), 10,851,337 returnees (refugees and internally displaced persons) (8%) and 6,464,736 other persons of concern (5%).

⁷ The initial budget was \$10,622 billion, but an additional budget of \$163.7 million was authorised due to the situation in Sudan. Update on budgets and funding (2024 and 2025).

⁸ See UNHCR press release (June 2025) UNHCR steadfast in refugee protection as it completes review of operations, structures and staffing.

of the end of June 2024, the Asia and Pacific region hosted approximately 7.1 million refugees and individuals in refugee-like situations. In addition to refugees, the region was home to:

- 393,400 asylum-seekers
- 6.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- 2.5 million stateless individuals
- 35,500 refugee returnees
- 367,800 IDP

9. These figures reflect a 3% increase from the end of 2023, primarily due to escalating internal displacement within Myanmar, where approximately 3.4 million people were displaced as of September 2024 (UNHCR, 2024k).
10. The region is also characterised by being home to more than half of the world's known stateless population (56%), composed mainly of the Rohingya. The Republic of Korea has not acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. UNHCR continues to advocate for the Republic of Korea to ratify this convention and to establish statelessness determination procedures to better protect individuals at risk of statelessness. There is no statelessness determination procedure and no official statistics on the number of stateless persons in the Republic of Korea. UNHCR advocates for statelessness determination procedures, accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and availability of Universal Birth Registration (UBR), a right which was affirmed by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Korea for the first time in March 2023.⁹
11. It should be noted that Asia and the Pacific is a region with growth potential for long-term fundraising, focusing on upper-middle-income countries and taking advantage of the development of a large emerging middle class. If UNHCR succeeds in achieving the target of a 70/30 ratio of individual contributions to those of partners, this outcome will put the organisation in a more balanced and sustainable funding model.

2.2.1 Operation of UNHCR Korea and its coordination with the Regional Bureau and Headquarters (HQ)

12. UNHCR Korea has implemented structural¹⁰ and strategic changes to strengthen its mandate.¹¹ The CO integrated the Communications pillar, which previously operated separately for the PSP and CO areas, under the supervision of the Senior PSP Officer, following a joint decision by RBAP and PSP Asia/DER (UNHCR Korea and Private sector partnerships team, 2021). These changes are in line with the four pillars of the UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy (2021-2025), which seeks to: (i) strengthen relationships with donors, (ii) optimise channels to increase individual donations, (iii) establish a communication strategy that conveys a positive narrative around refugees (perception shifting), and (iv) accelerate Private Partnerships and Philanthropy (PPH).¹²
13. UNHCR Korea has also implemented reporting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure smooth communication between RBAP and the HQ in Geneva. In 2023, the office successfully started the Datawarehouse project to establish a reporting and analysis pipeline, migrating data to Google Cloud Platform in collaboration with the HQ and the provider Human Software. This project aimed to achieve cost efficiencies and establish a global digital platform, even though its completion was rescheduled for

⁹ See for example Republic of Korea Multi-year 2023-2025, Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations

¹⁰ UNHCR Korea is organised under a Representative, followed by four main sections: External Relations, Administration, Protection and a PSP Section (which includes the Communication Section).

¹¹ The integrations of comms function happened in earlier part of 2024. In March/April 2025, the organisation-initiated realignment due to pause in funding to UNHCR. UNHCR Korea OL was reduced by 25% both in terms of budget and staff. Information provided by UNHCR at the time of writing the report (UNHCR Korea, 2024).

¹² UNHCR Korea and Private sector partnerships team, 2021

early 2024 due to delays in similar projects within PSP's offices in countries such as Thailand and Canada (UNHCR and Private Sector Partnerships Service, 2024). In 2023, UNHCR's DER also specified monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Digital Strategy in offices in Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas as one of its priorities to identify problems and document lessons learned (UNHCR, 2024g).

14. The Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2025-2027 indicates that PSP in the Republic of Korea had limitations in terms of human resources and digital infrastructure, which prevented it from achieving a greater impact in the established communication campaigns.¹³ The strategy further adds that the content created by HQ often does not fit with the cultural context of the Republic of Korea, affecting effectiveness (UNHCR, 2024e)¹⁴. In contrast, the strategy highlights that UNHCR is aligned with the Republic of Korea's government strategic priorities in seeking multi-year funding and will therefore explore other funding sources offered by KOICA and seek to expand partnerships. It also envisages the secondment of KOICA to UNHCR's HQ or regional bureaus to take the current partnership to the next level.

2.3 Country Context

15. In recent decades, the Republic of Korea has achieved significant economic growth, with real gross domestic product (GDP) increasing steadily. Between 2000 and 2023, the country's nominal GDP more than tripled, increasing from USD 562.3 billion to USD 1.73 trillion (Asian Development Bank, 2024). By 2025, the population of Republic of Korea is estimated at 51,681,000 (IMF, 2025), and the country has demonstrated resilience over the years through its economic growth. However, one of the key medium-term challenges lies in strengthening growth potential amidst rapid population aging as a result of a low fertility rate. In 2023, the country recorded the world's lowest birth rate, with just 0.72 babies per woman, repeatedly breaking its own record from 2018 and 2020 (BBC, 2025), further contributing to the diminishing workforce. The working-age population, which reached its peak in 2019, is expected to decline to 36.3 million (70.2% of total population) in 2024, and 34 million (66.4%) in 2030 (IMF, 2025). This demographic shift is placing considerable strain on labour supply and long-term economic growth prospects of the country.
16. Promoting highly qualified foreign talent is one of the keys (IMF, 2025) to address demographic pressures and boost productivity in the Republic of Korea. Although the government has promoted the participation of foreign workers in recent years, the IMF notes that greater efforts are needed to facilitate the transition from temporary worker visas (E-9 visa) to long-term skilled workers visas (E-7 and F-2), and to ease immigration policies that would attract international students or young professionals from the region seeking work experience. A study by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2022) on rural areas in the Republic of Korea also highlighted that restrictive visa policies have largely confined foreign workers to the agricultural sector, often under temporary contracts that are unattractive to local citizens but more appealing to individuals from lower-income countries in the region.
17. Despite challenges, such as income inequality, low fertility rates, and labour market dualism, the Republic of Korea remains globally influential, notably in technology and entertainment. As an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) member since 2010, the country became the first former aid recipient to join the Committee and has since doubled its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to approximately USD 2.2 billion over the past decade. In recent years, the country increased its ODA by 31% to United States Dollar (US\$) 4.8 billion in 2024, emphasizing strategic and performance-based aid.¹⁵ As of July 2025, the Republic of Korea has allocated a record-high US\$4.5 billion for its ODA budget for the year, marking a 3.8% increase from 2024. This allocation achieves the nation's goal of doubling its ODA budget from

¹³ UNHCR Korea, Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2025–2027: Executive Summary (2024), p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵ A more detailed country profile can be found in Appendix 3.

2019 levels—five years ahead of the 2030 target (Lao News Agency, 2025). The country's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita has surpassed that of Japan for the second consecutive year: Japan's GNI per capita was estimated at around \$34,500 last year. Among countries with populations exceeding 50 million, the Republic of Korea ranked sixth, after the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy (Choi On-jung and Lee Jae-eun, 2025).

2.3.1 Asylum and international protection in the Republic of Korea

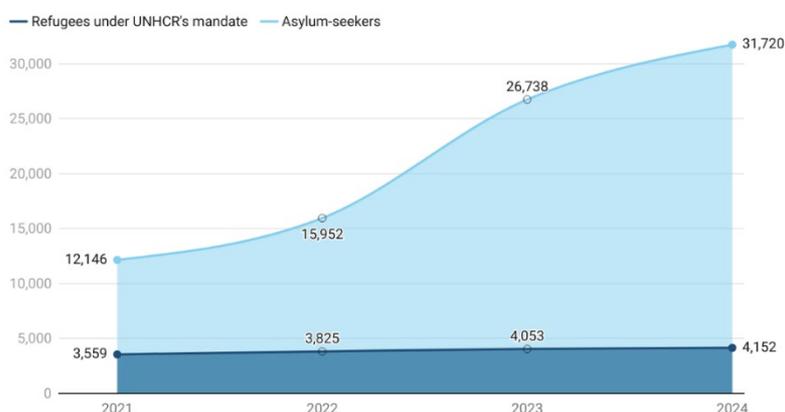
18. The Republic of Korea ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and adopted the Refugee Act in 2013, the first legislation of its kind in Asia (UNHCR, 2024). Notable progress continues to be made by the Republic of Korea in supporting people forced to flee their homes around the world.
19. Between 2020 and 2025, the Republic of Korea made gradual efforts to improve the protection of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons, driven by both domestic advocacy and international obligations. Key reforms included procedural improvements in RSD; expansion of temporary residence permits for undocumented children of foreign nationals including refugee children and increased institutional cooperation with CSOs. The MoJ initiated policy consultations on the establishment of a national statelessness determination mechanism, and legislative proposals were introduced to facilitate birth registration for foreign-born children to prevent childhood statelessness. In contrast to the low rate of recognition of refugee status, the government expanded access to humanitarian residence permits, which provide access to certain services and rights but do not grant international protection standards (UNHCR, 2023). In the area of child protection, recent developments showed an opportunity to reform the current legal framework and to establish a more inclusive birth registration system, which would significantly benefit asylum-seekers and refugees (Asia News, 2025).
20. Over the past decade, the Republic of Korea has steadily increased its financial contributions to UNHCR, reflecting its growing role in global humanitarian efforts and its support for refugee crises worldwide. In 2019 the Republic of Korea made five formal pledges and actively participated in the first-ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF). These government-led efforts have been complemented by strong engagement from civil society and the private sector, both of which play a key role in advancing refugee support through legal support, advocacy, and fundraising (UNHCR, 2022d).
21. Despite these significant contributions on the international stage, the national asylum system continues to face hurdles in effectively protecting those seeking refuge within its borders. The persistent low refugee recognition rate reflects a restrictive interpretation of the Refugee Act¹⁶ and a preference for granting temporary humanitarian stay permits over full refugee status (e.g. cases of Syrian, Afghan and Yemeni nationals).¹⁷ Additionally, the absence of a formal statelessness determination procedure hampers the identification and protection of stateless individuals, despite the Republic of Korea being a party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (UNHCR, 2022b, 2023).
22. The government is responsible for registration and RSD, and applicants have access to judicial review. However, national actors and international organisations have raised concerns regarding the practical application of refugee protection. Reports from (UNHCR, 2022e) and other organisations (NANCEN, 2024b), the East Asia Institute (Jinkyung Baek and Ha Eun Yoon, 2021), and (Global Detention Project, 2020) highlight the restrictive nature of migration policies, the limited number of recognised refugees and the conditions faced by asylum-seekers.

¹⁶ See for example, UNHCR Strategy report Republic of Korea, Multi-year 2023-2025, Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations, and NANCEN Refugee Rights Center (2020) Shouldering Responsibility: Reviewing South Korea's Refugee Status Determination Procedures Seven Years After the Refugee Act. Available at: <https://nancen.org/2069>.

¹⁷ The people from Afghanistan who arrived in Korea in 2021, fleeing the Taliban, were declared "persons of special merit," which is not a standard term in international refugee law. The Republic of Korea has recognised a limited number of Syrian nationals as refugees, most of whom were granted humanitarian status. See also the note below about Yemenis who arrived in Korea in 2018.

23. The protection environment has been shaped by public opinion, which has often been unsupportive of asylum-seekers, particularly those of non-ethnic Korean background. Both UNHCR surveys and those of other organisations show that a significant proportion of the population expresses concerns or reservations about refugees, influenced by concerns about national security and cultural integration. In 2020, a UNHCR survey revealed limited support (only 33%) for refugee reception (UNHCR, 2020)¹⁸, with incidents like the 2018 Jeju Yemeni influx illustrating the fragile public sentiment towards refugees (Rich TS, Windhorst S and Fjeld K, 2023). The UNHCR - IPSOS 2024 survey also showed that the Republic of Korea ranked among the countries with a lower level of refugee acceptance. However, surveys show that refugee acceptance improved during specific humanitarian actions for Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Ukraine nationals.¹⁹
24. While the Republic of Korea has received more than 125,000 refugee applications since it began processing them in 1994 (UNHCR, 2024b),²⁰ its refugee recognition rate is one of the lowest among advanced nations. From 2021 to 2024, the Republic of Korea registered 86,556 asylum-seekers, while the stateless population remained stable, with numbers ranging between 202 and 246 each year, for a total of 931 during this period. The Figure 1 shows the evolution of asylum - seekers and refugees according to UNHCR statistics.

Figure 1. Population data 2021-2024



Source: Republic of Korea Population Data -UNHCR

25. Despite positive outcomes, social protection coverage is limited, with fewer than 10% of forcibly displaced and stateless persons included in social protection systems. Additionally, 40% of refugee children participate in community-based child protection programmes. Financial access is another area where challenges persist. While 78% of the population hold a bank or mobile money account, the unemployment rate among forcibly displaced and stateless people in Korea stands at 10% compared to a 2.9% unemployment rate for the total labour force in the country for the same period (UNHCR-RBAP, 2025), (World Bank). The MoJ's *Korea Immigration and Integration Program* (KIIP), which is the flagship public programme to support the local integration of refugees, has limited refugee engagement, and healthcare access remains hindered by language and financial constraints (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2024). Recent advocacy includes improving humanitarian status provisions to allow family reunification.²¹

¹⁸ A joint survey conducted by UNHCR and Korea Research in 2020 showed that 53% of South Korean adults were opposed to receiving refugees, while 33% were in favour.

¹⁹ For more information, see Appendix 3.2.2.

²⁰ The total number of asylum applications for Korea is the sum of all applications registered by UNHCR on its statistics portal (2000-2024). It includes new applications and second attempts.

²¹ For more complete information on Refugees and Migrant Rights in the Republic of Korea, see Appendix 3.2.3.

2.4 Overview of UNHCR's Operations in the Republic of Korea

26. UNHCR Korea is dedicated to improving protection and finding solutions for refugees, asylum - seekers, and stateless individuals within the country. It also works to garner support for global humanitarian crises. UNHCR has a representation office in Seoul with 28 national, 2 international, and 18 affiliated staff as of January 2025. UNHCR pursues two sets of complementary objectives in the Republic of Korea: first, advancing protection and solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in the country, and second, securing the Republic of Korea's support for humanitarian needs globally. Progress is achieved through close cooperation with the Republic of Korea's MoFA, MoJ, and KOICA on the government side, and by working with diverse members of the Republic of Korea's dynamic civil society and private sector. With the government having taken responsibility for core protection procedures as well as for material assistance, UNHCR plays an advocacy, capacity-building, and catalytic approach well in line with UNHCR Korea's sustainable programming vision.
27. UNHCR Korea operates around four teams: Protection, External Relations (ER), PSP and Admin. According to UNHCR's centralised structure for the private sector resources mobilisation, the Global PSP Service and its country-level network are under the direct management of DER, and thus the PSP division of UNHCR Korea reports to the PSP regional and global teams, whereas it collaborates closely with UNHCR Korea.

2.4.1 Reconstruction of UNHCR's Theory of Change (ToC)²²

28. The evaluation team conducted a workshop with UNHCR Korea's CO personnel to frame UNHCR Korea's operations during the period under evaluation. This workshop involved retrospectively developing a ToC that describes the relationship between UNHCR Korea's strategic visions, the selected impact and outcome areas, and the actions (outputs) envisaged when the MYS was designed.
29. The primary objective of the ToC is to enhance the protection, empowerment, and solutions for forcibly displaced persons by improving access to the asylum system, expanding rights and services, and strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships and advocacy efforts. The ToC is structured around 4 main impact areas:
 - Protect: This impact area is centred on upholding the fundamental human rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people. Key elements include ensuring safe access across borders for those seeking refuge, guaranteeing the recognition of their asylum claims, and preventing returns to countries where they face danger or persecution. This commitment to protection directly empowers individuals by safeguarding their lives and dignity.
 - Empower: The empowerment component focuses on increasing the engagement and representation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in various activities and decision-making processes. Specific activities include engagement of refugee youths in empowerment projects under the Migration to Asia Peace (MAP) initiative and Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) and trainings for refugee community leaders.
 - Solve: This area aims to provide long-term and sustainable solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people through improved access to national services and the development of resettlement and complementary pathways.
 - Rights: This component focuses on ensuring the rights of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People are protected and that they have access to legal assistance and fair asylum processes. Activities

²² For the reconstructed ToC, see Appendix 9.

include legal advocacy for UBR bill submission, RSD training for MoJ officials, COI submissions, and legal assistance projects.

2.4.2 Guiding Strategies

30. UNHCR Korea has two guiding strategies: the programmatic Multi-Year Strategy for 2023-2025 and the UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy for 2021-2025.

Multi-Year Strategy 2023-2025

31. UNHCR Korea's work is structured around three main pillars: PROTECT, EMPOWER, and SOLVE. Under the PROTECT pillar, UNHCR aims to ensure that the protection of persons under its mandate is aligned with international standards. This is done through multi-stakeholder engagement to expand support for refugee applicants and advise stakeholders on refugee law and Country of Origin Information research. UNHCR collaborates with various actors to ensure non-refoulement at airports and works with the MoJ to build capacity, including ongoing RSD training. Additionally, UNHCR partners with legislative bodies, civil society, and other stakeholders to establish UBR and push for refugee and immigration law reforms. A key focus is also on enhancing legal assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers by strengthening the capacity of legal aid providers.
32. The EMPOWER pillar focuses on working with partners to help forcibly displaced populations thrive in peaceful and welcoming societies. UNHCR collaborates with NGOs to increase their capacity and empower refugee populations. UNHCR Korea also prioritises refugee participation in decision-making processes and ensures that refugees receive mental health and psychosocial support to bolster their resilience.
33. Through the SOLVE pillar, UNHCR seeks to enhance access to durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers in the Republic of Korea. This includes continued support for resettlement programmes and education pathways, while also advocating for alternative pathways such as labour mobility. In partnership with various organisations, UNHCR works to foster the inclusion of refugees in the Republic of Korea into broader societal frameworks.

PSP Context and Strategy 2021-2025

34. Since launching some small-scale private sector fundraising activities in mid-2009, UNHCR Korea turned the investment into a profit positive return within 2.5 years, doubling its annual revenue for five consecutive years (2009-2014) and growing by 50% (2015-2017). Uninterrupted growth continued until 2020 (+19% in 2018, +13% in 2019), when it levelled off and even declined in 2023 and 2024, while still generating significant net income. UNHCR Korea is now the 3rd most significant private funding source for UNHCR globally, bringing around 10% of the global private funding to the organisation, most of which has been unrestricted, being the 6th flexible funding source. According to UNHCR's Global PSP Strategy for 2018-2025, namely the 1 billion Strategy, the Republic of Korea was prioritised as one of the 8 Core countries with the potential to raise 100 million US\$ or more in 2025 onward.

2.5 Partnerships

35. UNHCR Korea works closely with partners such as MoFA, MoJ, and KOICA on the government side, and works with diverse members of the Republic of Korea's dynamic civil society. NGO partners received support from UNHCR to carry out activities that foster peaceful coexistence. They also advocate for the inclusion of forcibly displaced people within communities and national systems. NGOs play a key role in advocating for social integration and equality while supporting displaced individuals through their efforts at the community and national levels (UNHCR, 2024g).

36. UNHCR has established ties with the civil society networks interested in refugee matters, including the Korea Refugee Rights Network (KORRIN), the Rainbow Refugee Network, as well as the Korean Bar Association, individual lawyers, professors, foundations, academia, universities, research institutes and emerging relations with the private sector, local governments, artists, sports institutions, faith-based organisations. UNHCR is striving to deepen existing partnerships and further expand UNHCR's relations with non-conventional actors for better protection of refugees and asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2024). Additionally, the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) has redefined UNHCR's role in addressing refugee challenges and fostering strategic partnerships. While UNHCR's foundational mandate under the 1951 Refugee Convention remains unchanged, the GCR has expanded and operationalised its approach, as reflected in UNHCR's country strategy.

2.6 Fundraising Environment in the Republic of Korea

2.6.1 Public Funding

Funding for humanitarian assistance

37. The Republic of Korea significantly increased humanitarian funding from US\$ 1,795,439²³ in 2022 to US\$ 230,844,586²⁴ in 2023, and to US\$ 526,111,927²⁵ in 2024 (a 174% increase from the previous year) to the requested number of US\$ 473,514,913²⁶ for 2025 according to (MoFA, no date). Contributions pledged at the 2023 GRF include substantial flexible funding commitments and KOICA's US\$ 55 million for refugee and Internally Displaced People (IDP) support. The Republic of Korea's ODA budget increasingly prioritises humanitarian assistance, though NGO funding remains minimal.

UNHCR resource mobilisation

38. The Republic of Korea, UNHCR's 12th largest donor, notably increased contributions from US\$ 24.13 million (2023) to US\$ 66.7 million (2024), emphasizing flexible funding. Recent agreements, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with KOICA (US\$ 7-10 million annually), strengthen UNHCR's position in the humanitarian funding landscape in the country.²⁷

2.6.2 Private Funding

Resource mobilisation from private donors

39. The Republic of Korea ranks relatively low globally in philanthropy (88th in the World Giving Index of Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)), representing a significant decline from its 2011 position of 57th, showing a long-term downward trend in philanthropic engagement (CAF, 2024). Corporate donations decreased significantly to 29% of total private contributions in 2022. Recommended improvements (Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Korcham, 2023) include enhancing tax incentives, reducing regulatory constraints, and promoting philanthropy education.²⁸

²³ 236.6 billion Korean Won (KRW)The equivalent of USD\$1,795,439, as of 1 December 2022.

²⁴ 299.4 billion KRW. The equivalent of USD\$ 230,844,586 as of 1 December 2023.

²⁵ 740.1 billion KRW. The equivalent of USD\$ 526,111,927 as of 1 December 2024.

²⁶ 677.5 billion KRW The equivalent of USD\$ 473,514,913 as of 26 January 2025.

²⁷ Further information on the mobilisation of public funding by UNHCR can be found in response to evaluation question 7.

²⁸ Further information on resource mobilisation from private donors can be found in Appendix 3.4.1.

UNHCR Private Fundraising Results

40. UNHCR Korea has experienced notable growth in private donations, boosted by tax-deductible status and crisis-driven awareness.²⁹ However, recent growth rates and donor retention have declined, prompting a strategic shift toward digital fundraising and donor development to increase their lifetime value. In the context of the GCR, UNHCR Korea has strived to develop comprehensive and multiyear partnerships with corporate partners and faith-based organisations. UNHCR's new strategy focuses on expanding these partnerships and advocacy efforts.

Fundraising Channels and Income Streams

41. UNHCR primarily employs face-to-face campaigns, digital fundraising, and media collaborations to solicit individual donations. Although face-to-face was initially predominant, recruitment challenges and growing preferences for contactless interactions have shifted the focus towards digital and social media platforms. Private sector donations significantly increased due to humanitarian crises, such as the 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake, despite prevailing public concern in the Republic of Korea regarding refugee-related issues, reflected in both UNHCR studies and surveys,³⁰ specialised publications,³¹ and the national media. Corporate partnerships also offer non-financial contributions, exemplified by TOPTEN10's successful pilot programme employing refugees and providing clothing for overseas operations. Partnerships with various faith-based organisations also offer financial and shared value contributions, exemplified by the Joint Pledge with the Korea Conference of Religion for Peace (KCRP) and 7 major religious institutions at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, which committed strong cooperation to induce social change in the perception of refugees in the Republic of Korea's society as well as financial contributions.

²⁹ For more details, see Appendix 3.4.

³⁰ A joint survey conducted by UNHCR and Korea Research in 2020 showed that 53% of South Korean adults were opposed to receiving refugees, while 33% were in favour.

³¹ See, for example: (Rich et al., 2021), (Choi et al., 2024), (Yuk & Shin, 2024) and (Timothy S. Rich et al., 2020)

3 PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Purpose and scope

42. As per the ToR³² and as outlined in the validated Inception Report, the primary purpose of this evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of UNHCR’s performance and results in fostering partnerships and resource mobilisation. The evaluation was framed by the two strategies under implementation (MYS 2023-2025 and Private Sector Partnership (PSP) strategy, the Republic of Korea 2021-2025) and primarily focused on partnerships and resource mobilisation for the organisation, with a secondary focus on protection, community empowerment, and the implementation of solutions for the refugees and asylum - seekers in the Republic of Korea. It identified challenges, opportunities, and best practices, providing lessons and recommendations to strengthen UNHCR’s strategic approaches. By doing so, this CSE aimed to ensure the sustainability of UNHCR Korea’s efforts in protection, community empowerment, and solutions for persons it serves in the Republic of Korea, while also informing the new management team’s priorities.
43. The CSE, which spanned 2022–2024, focused primarily on local and global fundraising activities and alignment with UNHCR’s regional and HQ objectives; and secondarily, on domestic protection initiatives. The scope included policy advocacy, partnership engagement, public awareness-raising, and capacity development. The evaluation will provide direction and recommendations for the review of planning with a view to strengthening the role of UNHCR Korea as one of UNHCR's main sources of funding.

3.2 Evaluation questions

44. The evaluation was structured around four evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability), based on the definitions of the OECD, and nine main evaluation questions.³³ Suggested modifications to the evaluation questions emphasized greater specificity in assessing communication and resource mobilisation alignment, strategic positioning, and return on investment (RoI).³⁴

Table 1. Key Evaluation Questions

Criteria	Main Evaluation Questions
Relevance (Protection)	KEQ1: How well has UNHCR’s protection strategy aligned with Korea's specific legal, social, and political context to meet the needs of refugees and asylum - seekers domestically?
Relevance (Resource Mobilisation)	KEQ2. How relevant have UNHCR’s fundraising strategies (whether for Government and multilateral funding actors or private funding) been in the 's specific socio-political, economic and fundraising contexts?
Relevance (Resource Mobilisation & Communications)	KEQ3. For communication and resource mobilisation, how aligned were the Korean multi-year strategies with each other, and with the regional and global ones?

³² The ToR can be found in Appendix 1. Specifically paragraphs 4, 44, and 46 highlight that the primary purpose of the evaluation is partnerships and resource mobilisation.

³³ Evaluation questions are listed in Table 1. Subquestions can be found in Appendix 2: Evaluation Matrix.

³⁴ For suggested modifications to the evaluation questions, see Appendix 4.2.

Efficiency (Protection & Resource Mobilisation)	KEQ4. How efficiently has UNHCR Korea utilised UNHCR's resources at the country and regional ³⁵ levels to maximize domestic protection and global fundraising and partnership outcomes in Korea?
Efficiency (Protection & Resource Mobilisation)	KEQ5. To what extent have the processes and institutional mechanisms within UNHCR facilitated rapid adaptation to emerging opportunities and risks in partnerships and resource mobilisation?
Effectiveness (Protection)	KEQ6. How effectively has UNHCR supported the Korean government and civil society in strengthening national asylum systems and protection frameworks for refugees and asylum - seekers?
Effectiveness (Resource Mobilisation)	KEQ7. How effectively has UNHCR positioned itself strategically in Korea to secure funding particularly with government entities, civil society sectors, and private sector partners for UNHCR globally?
Sustainability (Protection)	KEQ8. How have UNHCR's policy and legal support contributed to longer-term system changes and protection for asylum - seekers?
Sustainability (Resource Mobilisation)	KEQ9. What approaches/mechanisms have been established to ensure long-term support from the private and public sectors regarding resource mobilisation?

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Evaluation approach and design³⁶

45. The CSE adhered to OECD/DAC, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), and UNHCR norms, emphasising impartiality, credibility, and utility. Utilising participatory, formative, and summative approaches, the evaluation employed a theory-based framework, guided by a retrospectively developed ToC.³⁷ This ToC outlined causal pathways and assumptions underlying UNHCR's strategies in the Republic of Korea, facilitating analysis of programme effectiveness and relevance.
46. An evaluation matrix³⁸ (see Appendix 2) was developed during the Inception Phase as a structured planning tool that links evaluation questions to specific data collection methods, indicators, and sources. It ensured a systematic coverage of all evaluation criteria by clearly mapping out what information would be collected, how it would be gathered, and from whom.
47. This CSE was conducted using participatory and realist evaluation techniques that explored "What worked? For whom? How? and under what circumstances?", especially regarding examining resource mobilisation and private-sector partnerships. The realist lens addressed geopolitical constraints, national interests, and partnership dynamics to evaluate strategic alignment with the Republic of Korea's socio-political and economic contexts.
48. As per the ToR,³⁹ this evaluation's primary focus was on fundraising, partnerships, advocacy, strategic positioning, and UNHCR Korea's protection work. Due to its institutional scope, this CSE explicitly excluded gender and coherence analyses, and it does not engage with normative frameworks (such as UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy, the UN's Disability Inclusion Strategy, etc.).

³⁵ And the international level, if relevant.

³⁶ See Appendix 4 for extended information about the methodology that underpins this CSE.

³⁷ For the Theory of Change, see Appendix 9.

³⁸ For the evaluation matrix, see Appendix 2.

³⁹ The ToR can be found in Appendix 1.

49. Stakeholders, both internal (UNHCR workforce) and external (e.g. government representatives, private funders, NGOs), participated through interviews, focus group discussions, and written consultations. The refined recommendations will be developed collaboratively with key stakeholders to ensure their relevance and further implementation.

3.3.2 Overview of the Evaluation Process

Data Collection Methods

50. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach to triangulate findings from various information sources: A desk review of 166 key UNHCR and public documents was conducted, followed by 44 semi-structured interviews with 53 key informants (47% women).⁴⁰ Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the selection of key informants was representative, and a snowball sampling strategy was subsequently adopted to identify new informants referred to by those previously interviewed. Between February and early March 2025, a field visit was conducted in Seoul to collect data from key stakeholders and obtain direct insights. The evaluation team also ran two focus groups with UNHCR staff from relevant departments to gather detailed information on resource mobilisation and strategic positioning (see Appendices 6 and 13). To complement this analysis, two case studies were developed to gain a deeper understanding of key initiatives. This enabled the evaluation team to explore complex interactions, gain valuable qualitative insights, and identify key learnings (Appendix 13). In the same way, the SWOT analysis provided a concise, structured overview of the internal and external factors influencing the effectiveness and sustainability of a programme or strategy (Appendix 11).

Data Analysis and Validation

51. A rigorous coding and thematic approach was used for the data analysis process, which involved the use of Atlas.ti software. A total of 1,580 text fragments from the interviews were analysed, and the relationship between themes and stakeholders' perspectives was illustrated through co-occurrence tables and network representations (Appendix 10). This process was complemented with an Excel-based evidence matrix, which facilitated the triangulation of evidence from multiple sources.⁴¹
52. These tools allowed the review team to confirm expected outcomes and identify unintended results, as required by the terms of reference. Ethical safeguards—including conflict-of-interest management and informed consent protocols—were consistently applied to mitigate potential biases. To maximally assure the anonymity of the sources of qualitative data used when analysing the findings, no additional information that might lead to the identification of that source has been provided. Analysis methods included thematic narrative, descriptive quantitative, iterative qualitative, and quantitative data analysis, ensuring comprehensive triangulation.⁴² A validation workshop on recommendations was held to co-develop and refine recommendations.

Limitations and Mitigation Measures

53. Most of the risks identified during the inception phase were mitigated through close consultations between UNHCR and the evaluation team. Key mitigation measures included proactive stakeholder engagement, clear communication, ongoing coordination with the CO and the Evaluation Office, and contingency planning. However, some limitations remained unresolved, such as limited access to certain

⁴⁰ A synthesised analysis and a complete listing of these documents can be found in Appendix 4.4.1.

⁴¹ Tables showing the co-occurrence of evidence and data related to participants and information by question can be found in Appendix 10. The tables that appear in this appendix were generated by Atlas.ti to analyse interview content and identify concepts that appear together in the same segment of text (co-occurrences). These tables help to understand which themes are more strongly connected in the participants' responses, revealing links for qualitative analysis. Key concepts identified in the analysis appear in rows. Main evaluation themes appear in columns. Numbers show how many times a concept co-occurred with a theme.

⁴² For further information on data analysis, validation, and triangulation, see Appendix 4.6.

key stakeholders (e.g. PSP corporate partners) and limited availability of information in specific areas (e.g. partner reporting).

Governance and Quality Assurance

54. The evaluation was managed by UNHCR's Evaluation Office, supported by a designated Evaluation Manager, the CO, and an Evaluation Reference Group, to ensure transparency, stakeholder engagement, and oversight.⁴³ Quality assurance integrated UNHCR and UNEG standards, involving internal and external peer review, and systematic quality checks throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting phases.⁴⁴

Ethical Guidelines

55. The evaluation adhered to Norms and Standards for Evaluation (UNEG, 2016), Ethical Guidelines (UNEG, 2020) and Code of Conduct (UNEG, 2008); as well as the UN Supplier Code of Conduct (United Nations, 2017) and ensured compliance with these guidelines during all phases of the evaluation. Additionally, the evaluation team followed UNHCR's General "Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy" (UNHCR, 2022c) UNHCR's "Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability 2018" (UNHCR, 2018) and UNHCR's Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNHCR, 2019b). Throughout the evaluation, the team applied the principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, and rigorous data protection protocols. The evaluation complied with international ethical guidelines and best practice in evaluation processes and research (which do not require ethical approval if certain principles are guaranteed, and children and adolescents do not participate). The evaluation team members involved in field-level data collection have received training on the ethics of data collection and evaluation.⁴⁵

Data Protection

56. The evaluation team provided subject anonymity by ensuring the evaluation could not link individual responses with participants' identities. The evaluation team maintained the confidentiality of information collected from participants.⁴⁶

⁴³ For further information on the composition of the evaluation team, see Appendix 8. For information regarding the composition of the ERG see Appendix 7.

⁴⁴ For further information, see Appendix 4.9.

⁴⁵ For further information, see Appendix 4.10.

⁴⁶ For further information, see Appendix 4.11.

4 FINDINGS

KEQ1. How well has UNHCR’s protection strategy aligned with the Republic of Korea's specific legal, social, and political context to meet the needs of refugees and asylum - seekers domestically? (Relevance)

57. UNHCR Korea’s protection strategy demonstrates a strong alignment with the Republic of Korea’s legal framework, complex political landscape, and evolving societal attitudes toward refugees and asylum-seekers. Designed to bridge the gap between international standards and the Republic of Korea’s domestic constraints, the strategy addresses protection gaps in a challenging national protection environment that partially align with international standards, prioritising border control over humanitarian protection. The five-pronged approach strengthens RSD, expands access to legal aid, safeguards against refoulement, reforms detention and deportation practices, and promotes birth registration to prevent statelessness. UNHCR’s strategy’s relevance is evident in its responsiveness to progressive developments, such as the 2022 regularisation policy for undocumented children, as well as ongoing challenges, including limited access to territory. UNHCR’s legal and advocacy work, particularly targeted legislative submissions and capacity-building initiatives, reflects a tailored approach to the Republic of Korea’s legal decision-making processes and gaps in the implementation of the Refugee Act.

58. Socially and politically, the strategy reflects a deliberate effort to navigate public and political hesitancy surrounding refugee protection. UNHCR has cultivated a broad coalition of civil society actors, members of the National Assembly, progressive political entities, and private sector allies to advance its mandate. This inclusive engagement has enabled the promotion of systemic reform and public awareness campaigns. In a culturally homogeneous society with little experience of welcoming refugees, communication strategies that humanise refugees have proven relevant.

59. **UNHCR Korea’s protection strategy demonstrates a deliberate and dynamic alignment with the Republic of Korea’s complex legal, political, and social context.** Operating within a national asylum system predominantly shaped by immigration control logics⁴⁷, UNHCR strategically oriented its interventions to bridge the gap between international protection standards and domestic constraints. Its five-pronged protection strategy—comprising (i) strengthening RSD, (ii) expanding legal aid and court advocacy, (iii) preventing refoulement, (iv) reforming detention and deportation practices, and (v) promoting birth registration to prevent statelessness— reflects a nuanced response to gaps in the implementation of the Refugee Act and broader asylum procedures. This strategic design proved particularly relevant in light of both positive developments and regressive trends in the Republic of Korea’s protection landscape.⁴⁸ For instance, UNHCR adapted to opportunities such as the MoJ’s 2022 regularisation policy for undocumented children, while also addressing concerning practices that restrict access to territory or impose burdensome procedural constraints. The strategy was also tailored to the operational realities of the asylum system, characterised by compressed timelines—such as the seven-

⁴⁷ See, for example: UNHCR Republic of Korea ABC / Strategy Republic of Korea CO Strategy 2022, and UNHCR Republic of Korea ABC / Strategy Republic of Korea CO MYS 2023-2025.

⁴⁸ See for example the Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report. UPR: 3rd Cycle, 28th Session. Republic of Korea, which includes contributions from CSOs (Advocates for Public Interest Law). Also see UNHCR documents (UNCHR Annual Results Report 2023, Republic of Korea, Internal / UNHCR Republic of Korea, Strategy Report, Multi-year 2023-2025, Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations) and concerns expressed by CSOs in various forums regarding the risk of non-refoulement (e.g. Jae-hyuk Park, “Justice Ministry’s Tougher Stance on Refugees Prompts Concerns from Activists,” The Korea Times, December 13, 2023, <https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/southkorea/society/20231213/justice-ministrys-tougher-stance-on-refugees-prompts-concerns-from-activists>). The litigation work of the GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation, one of the UNHCR’s legal aid partners, also exemplifies the necessity and appropriateness of UNHCR’s strategy to maintain and promote international standards and core principles, and to avoid regression.

day decision window at borders—and rejection rates often exacerbated by overburdened adjudication bodies and limited access to legal representation. In response, UNHCR provided legal opinions, supported capacity-building within state agencies, and advocated for reforms aimed at fairer and more efficient asylum processes. Available evidence corroborates the appropriateness of this adaptive approach, highlighting UNHCR’s role in reinforcing protection standards through sustained engagement with authorities, legal institutions, and other actors. Formal legal submissions and commentaries—such as those concerning national legislative amendments (e.g. Refugee Act, Equality Act) further anchor the strategy in Korea’s evolving legal environment and demonstrate UNHCR’s commitment to context-sensitive and rights-based protection interventions.

60. **UNHCR Korea’s approach to protection, which is built on an extensive network of partnerships, is appropriate to the legal and social context in which it operates.** The strategy emphasises collaboration with multiple actors, including progressive political groups, members of the National Assembly, CSOs, and corporate partners. For instance, initiatives such as the Migration and Refugee Research Forum and direct engagement with key industry players (e.g. apparel companies like TOPTEN10) reflect efforts to build support both at the grassroots and policy levels. By connecting civil society with progressive political actors and even corporate partners (e.g. initiatives involving apparel companies and technology firms), UNHCR Korea’s approach has: a) identified suitable stakeholders, and, b) succeeded in building a multi-stakeholder network through which it can realise various aspects of its five-prong protection strategy.
61. **This diversified engagement was relevant to UNHCR Korea’s endeavours to overcome barriers to influencing decision-makers, while also addressing funding and resource constraints through innovative partnerships.** Gaps in the implementation of the Refugee Act, coupled with the difficulty of making significant progress in reviewing or aligning the legal framework with international standards, have led UNHCR to adopt a strategic and multi-layered advocacy approach. While there is an increasing trend toward inter-ministerial committees and partnerships between UNHCR and MoFA or MoJ, institutional considerations (e.g. limited positive legislative action) continue to limit comprehensive reforms. Additionally, the strategy involves a focused effort to educate government officials and the public about international protection standards, aiming to reconcile domestic policies with global humanitarian norms, an approach that not only most respondents observed to be fitting, but was also endorsed in UNHCR documents.⁴⁹
62. **UNHCR Korea’s strategy emphasises that advocacy activities extend beyond fundraising.** There is a clear call for improved public communication, crafting narratives that highlight not only the vulnerabilities of refugees but also their potential contributions to society. This is evident in initiatives like campaigns for UBR and formal submissions on legislative proposals. For example, in October 2024 legislative proposal to amend the Immigration Act, UNHCR commended efforts to curb indefinite immigration detention while warning that the proposed changes still allow prolonged, even child, asylum-seeker detention without robust oversight (UNHCR, 2025b). Similarly, its formal comments on the 2021 legislative amendment proposal to the Republic of Korea’s Refugee Act welcomed integration steps but warned that discretionary elements could compromise fair asylum procedures and non-refoulement.

⁴⁹ See for example the UNHCR’s Comments on the Legislative Amendment Proposal to the Refugee Act of the Republic of Korea (2022) which provides technical recommendations from UNHCR to the Korean National Assembly, including systematic training programmes for RSD officers to align domestic refugee procedures with international protection standards. The 2022 and 2023 Annual Reports further confirm UNHCR’s efforts to educate and support authorities. In 2022, this included technical advice to MoJ, courts and civil society on international refugee law and close coordination to improve RSD quality. In 2023, UNHCR continued working with legal practitioners and authorities to ensure access to territory and fair procedures for asylum-seekers. Interviews across different stakeholder profiles also pointed to UNHCR’s efforts to engage with the Ministry of Justice and its involvement in training MoJ staff.

KEQ2. How relevant have UNHCR’s fundraising strategies (whether for Government and multilateral funding actors or private funding) been in the specific socio-political, economic and fundraising contexts? (Relevance)

63. On the public funding front, UNHCR made efforts to align its approach with the government’s international development ambitions and foreign policy directives, such as those articulated in the Republic of Korea’s Third Strategic Plan for Development Cooperation (2021–2025). This alignment facilitated an increase in income to UNHCR and enabled humanitarian cooperation through long-term programming partnerships, including a significant MoU between KOICA and UNHCR. However, UNHCR’s share of government funding still lags behind other major UN agencies, indicating that further alignment with the Republic of Korea’s strategic interests and more proactive engagement are needed. Additionally, increased emphasis on results-based management and accountability—reflected in KOICA’s detailed reporting requirements and cost efficiency norms—have challenged UNHCR’s capabilities (as a global agency) to adapt to local institutional practices.
64. In the private sector, UNHCR Korea’s investment in Individual Giving (IG) has largely reflected market realities, capitalising on the country’s high internet penetration, cultural predisposition to charitable giving, and the strategic value of unrestricted funding. Notably, digital acquisition and engagement strategies were timely, given the rise of “un-tact” culture post-COVID-19. Yet, the stagnation in IG income, driven by donor fatigue and demographic shifts, underscores the need for greater innovation and diversification, particularly in the PPH segment, which never exceeded 8.5% of private sector income between 2022 and 2024. UNHCR’s partnerships with faith-based organisations have been highly relevant and value-aligned. On the other hand, expanding corporate engagement has proven challenging due to differing domestic giving priorities and due diligence processes. Further efforts to strengthen the PPH through targeted engagement with corporate, foundation, and major donor streams, as well as to enhance staff capacity and public understanding toward refugees may better position it to reach its potential. Communication efforts have had limited resonance with audiences in the Republic of Korea, calling for more emotionally compelling narratives and localised tailored messaging.

Public funding strategy

65. **UNHCR is one of the Republic of Korea’s five priority United Nations (UN) agencies, alongside World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and World Health Organization (WHO), for funding and political support.** External stakeholders have noted that, given UNHCR’s positive relationship with the government and the favourable environment for ODA, UNHCR Korea is well-positioned to compete with the largest UN agencies for funding. However, the organisation falls behind sister agencies in maintaining a robust focus on government partnership and fundraising in the Republic of Korea. Despite growing public funding to UNHCR⁵⁰, the organisation receives the least government funding for humanitarian assistance among the five major UN agencies. According to key informants, this results from a combination of factors: the political sensitivity and complexity surrounding refugee issues in the Republic of Korea, the relatively short history of UNHCR’s partnerships compared to other international organisations, and a limited proactive communication approach, which constrains UNHCR’s ability to align with the Republic of Korea’s strategic interests. These observations are also reflected in UNHCR’s

⁵⁰ See Effectiveness section.

reports⁵¹, which highlight ongoing challenges in public engagement and institutional partnerships. The reports describe a cordial government relationship, supported by technical cooperation, although this is occasionally affected by politically sensitive issues.

66. UNHCR's public resource mobilisation approach reflects a growing responsiveness to the country's evolving ODA policy priorities, which increasingly emphasise strategic partnerships.

The Government of the Republic of Korea in the Third Strategic Plan for Development Cooperation (2021-25) has highlighted the importance of strengthening strategic cooperation based on the comparative advantages of the Republic of Korea's five priority UN agencies and commits to expanding support as a responsible member of the international community. In line with this focus, UNHCR has engaged with key government institutions such as KOICA by aligning its communication and programme proposals with the Republic of Korea's global cooperation objectives.

67. While UNHCR has taken important steps to align with the Republic of Korea's evolving international commitments, there remains scope to deepen collaboration and build on recent progress.

UNHCR has committed to following up on the pledges made by the Republic of Korea at the 2023 GRF, including providing at least 30% of the Republic of Korea's contributions as unearmarked or at least 50% as flexible funding. The Republic of Korea's engagement in key international initiatives such as the "New Deal for Fragile States," the "Grand Bargain," the "New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants," the "Global Compact on Refugees," and the OECD DAC Recommendations on Linking Humanitarian Assistance, Development, and Peace (HDP Nexus) indicates an increased willingness to contribute to global humanitarian frameworks and improve the quality and effectiveness on aid. UNHCR should harness this opportunity to further strengthen its partnership with the Republic of Korea's K and reinforce its role as a trusted and responsive multilateral partner.⁵²

68. Despite positive results in partnerships with national institutions, reflected in increased public funding, UNHCR's project management and overall communication were not seen as fully aligned with the evolving monitoring and evaluation requirements.

As ODA has increased significantly in recent years, the Republic of Korea has placed more emphasis than ever on accountability, particularly in terms of transparent financial reporting and measurable results to demonstrate the effective use of public funds. KOICA's policy increasingly emphasises systematic reporting and monitoring, with mandatory biannual progress reports to ensure clear visibility on programme performance and fund utilisation. In this context, KOICA has underscored the value of field visits—an approach commonly adopted by other UN agencies—as a means to enhance transparency, assess programme effectiveness firsthand, and strengthen donor confidence. This suggestion aligns with UNHCR's strategic commitments and was also echoed by several donor interviewees, who highlighted that field visits can significantly improve trust and understanding of UNHCR's work in the field.⁵³

Private funding strategy

69. UNHCR Korea's strong investment in (IG) was relevant given the market structure and giving habits in the Republic of Korea and the potential of the domestic market.

During the years covered by this evaluation (2022 to 2024), the philanthropic landscape in Republic of Korea presented high IG potential. This is related to its population of 51.77 million people in 2023 (of which 36.55 million are of

⁵¹ See for example UNHCR KOR CO Annual Results Report 2023 which describes how the sensitivity of refugee issues can challenge public engagement and discourage decision makers, as well as the persistent anti-refugee sentiment. The report also mentions friction between the UNHCR and the Refugee Policy Division, as well as limited collaboration. It describes a cordial, yet occasionally tense, relationship with the MoJ. Despite legislative processes for restrictive measures on refugees and asylum - seekers, cooperation has continued. Consistent references to sensitivity and political complexity surrounding refugees, as well as structural limitations in governmental coordination and limited communication, emerged from interviews with a range of profiles.

⁵² For more details, see the evaluation question on the positioning and added value of UNHCR.

⁵³ As outlined in the UNHCR Korea Strategy 2023–2025, UNHCR committed to increasing synergy with KOICA through staff exchange and shadowing programmes, and to supporting partner NGO's field missions to complement the impacts and visibility of Republic of Korea- funded programmes. As stated in the strategy, KOICA is consistently referenced in as one of UNHCR's principal partners in the Republic of Korea, along with MoFA and MOJ. Donor interviews also highlight the value of field visits, noting that such opportunities can provide a deeper understanding of UNHCR's operations and are genuinely appreciated.

working age), the high average wealth per capita,⁵⁴ and a well-established culture of charitable giving, traditionally focused on religious organisations. Although recently IG income in the Republic of Korea has shown a slight decline, initially driven by a decrease in the number of donors after the 2021 peak and then marked by a reduction in the average gift value in 2024, the overall potential for IG remained strong in the country. IG is acknowledged as strategically important and a crucial source of quality (unrestricted) funding, according to the Global UNHCR PSP strategy, and UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy 2021-2025.

70. **UNHCR Korea's shift towards digital investment, especially in acquisition, was appropriate.** The highly connected society in the Republic of Korea, where internet penetration reached 97% in 2023 (WB), has seen rapid growth in digital donation channels, a trend that accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic with the rise of the "un-tact" (contactless) culture. The integration of both online and offline touchpoints in the private fundraising strategy was also relevant, given that donors are increasingly responsive to multichannel appeals and messages.⁵⁵
71. **The integration of religious leaders into UNHCR's PPH and communication strategy has been relevant given the alignment between humanitarian and faith-based values, the financial capacity of religious communities, and their influence through broad-based media networks.**⁵⁶ Targeting faith-based organisations within civil society served a dual purpose: fostering positive communication about refugees and mobilising resources—since religious communities have significant financial capacity.⁵⁷ UNHCR's partnership with the Korea Conference of Religion for Peace (KCRP) was an important step to promote UNHCR's mandate and values through the seven national religious organisations in Korea, and to convey UNHCR's PPH and communication needs to the members of the religious spectrum. KCRP and eight other religious organisations made a joint pledge at the 2023 GRF.
72. **The activities carried out to increase income from existing donors were highly relevant, especially in a context where acquiring new donors is becoming increasingly difficult.**⁵⁸ According to UNHCR Korea reports, this income, primarily generated through regular donations, remained relatively stable over the period, with increases in 2022 (+2%) and 2023 (+4%), followed by a small 3% decline in 2024.
73. **Despite the growth of a well-established culture of corporate giving in the Republic of Korea (Beautiful Foundation, 2020), corporate giving has yet to become a significant source of income for UNHCR Korea.** The corporate culture of giving and environmental, social, and governance practices is strong in the Republic of Korea in large companies.⁵⁹ Additionally, corporations have the potential to align more closely with the Global Compact objectives than individual major donors and are also reactive to global emergencies (as seen in the UNHCR Turkey-Syria emergency appeal, according to UNHCR and Private Sector Partnerships Service, 2024). Corporate giving in the Republic of Korea has traditionally focused primarily on domestic issues.⁶⁰ It is slowly opening to more international reach, under the broader influence of the country, which is becoming an increasingly important player in international development. Corporate giving is also more susceptible to economic and political changes than IG. Potential corporate partners must be vetted via UNHCR's due diligence process; data collected shows varying opinions as to the level of constraints/limitations these internal due diligence processes place on corporate giving. In this complex environment with high potential, sought after by many non-

⁵⁴ The Bank of Korea announced that the national GNI per capita increased 1.2% year-on-year, to USD \$36,624 in 2024.

⁵⁵ See question 7 for the analysis of UNHCR Korea digital investment.

⁵⁶ As reflected in the UNHCR Korea Private sector partnerships service, Private partnerships & philanthropy, Strategic framework 2018-2025; UNHCR Korea Private sector partnerships service, year-end annual partnerships & marketing report 2023. Also acknowledged by several informants.

⁵⁷ Ipsos Country Report South Korea (April 2023) - UNHCR Brand Measurement: Those who are religious are significantly more likely to be aware, familiar, positive and likely to donate to UNHCR than those who are non-religious.

⁵⁸ See section on Return on investment made in PSP for further details.

⁵⁹ IPSOS – 2025 – South Korea 2025 shifts and explorations decoding emerging trends and opportunities

⁶⁰ According to the 2024 Social Contribution White Paper: Responsible Business, Moving Beyond ESG, only 5% of the 2023 funds of the top 100 companies for corporate social programs were distributed to overseas beneficiaries. The focus on domestic issue also was confirmed by KIIs.

profit organisations, UNHCR Korea has built some valuable partnerships but has not managed to achieve a steady income growth.

74. **Generally, the narrative of UNHCR Korea’s communication and PSP activities did not sufficiently incorporate themes that were topical and emotionally resonant for public, limiting their ability to overcome divided public perceptions toward the refugee population.**⁶¹ Hence, public fatigue with traditional refugee narratives required counterbalancing with positive storytelling. Surveys and interviews reveal that messages and activities that connect directly with people’s interests, along with more touchpoints from UNHCR Korea that don’t solely focus on fundraising, such as calls to action, were essential to changing the public’s knowledge about and perception of refugees and asylum-seekers. Relevant initiatives were nevertheless undertaken by UNHCR Korea, notably with Newneek (since 2022) and Fortune Korea.⁶²
75. **New forms of giving have emerged in the Republic of Korea, and donor behaviour has evolved, especially concerning Millennials and Gen Zer’s as compared to Boomers and were not prominently integrated into the PSP strategy of UNHCR Korea.** Recent trends indicate a slowdown in the growth of regular donations and this situation is expected to worsen as new generations emerge.⁶³ Since the COVID-19 pandemic, both prospects and donors have become increasingly hesitant to commit to future donations, due to various factors of uncertainty, including the pandemic risk, political instability and global economic challenges. As a result, One-Off gifts became more critical for income generation. An analysis of UNHCR Korea’s PSP strategy and annual plans did not find early (for One-Off giving) or major aspirations to innovate such as leveraging trends⁶⁴ on more participatory⁶⁵ activities (e.g. marathons, games or social media challenges), on fandom activities and merchandise and distribution of goods.⁶⁶

UNHCR [Error! Reference source not found.](#)[Error! Reference source not found.](#)[Error! Reference source not found.](#)[Error! Reference source not found.](#)partnerships alignment with each partners’ missions, strategic and operational objectives

76. **UNHCR Korea has made meaningful progress in aligning with the government’s evolving policy and legal frameworks by implementing projects that support protection and durable solutions.** Republic of Korea’s humanitarian assistance is guided by key frameworks such as the Overseas Emergency Relief Act (enacted March 2007), the Revised Humanitarian Assistance Strategy (July 2019), and the Annual Comprehensive Implementation Plan for International Development Cooperation MoFA, no date). Notably, the 2019 revision of the Humanitarian Assistance Strategy expanded the scope of the Overseas Emergency Relief Act beyond emergency relief to also cover prevention activities and strengthen the linkages between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, thereby making the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach a legally binding principle across the government (National Assembly Research Service, 2022). UNHCR Korea’s collaboration efforts with KOICA across these expanded areas are aligned closely with the Republic of Korea’s strategic priorities and policy direction.
77. **The strategic role of civil society as a mediator and advocate in humanitarian policy has not been fully leveraged with current UNHCR Korea’s or public institutions’ engagement approaches/frameworks.** While the Republic of Korea government has substantially increased the humanitarian component of its ODA in recent years, the formation of a comprehensive, long-term humanitarian

⁶¹ Anti-refugee sentiment is a term used in numerous UNHCR documents and, along with other similar terms, also appears frequently in articles and the national and international media. This information was presented to the evaluation team in multiple KIs from different categories of stakeholders.

⁶² The complete case study can be found in Appendix 13.

⁶³ Giving Trends 2024 Report by Community Chests, from a 2024 strategic report from the Beautiful Foundation studying the Relationship between Social Participation and Donation Behaviour of Gen MZ and feedback given by Kis.

⁶⁴ Community Chest – 2024. Giving trends

⁶⁵ Example: World Vision’s Global 6K for Water, which raised awareness about global water scarcity while promoting personal wellness through a fun run.

⁶⁶ Examples: Save the Children’s Emergency Relief Bracelet, UNICEF hope ring.

strategy remains a challenge, as humanitarian assistance has not historically been a core focus on the Republic of Korea's broader ODA architecture. In this evolving policy landscape, CSOs have played a key role in advancing humanitarian priorities—advocating for the adoption of the Republic of Korea's first Humanitarian Assistance Strategy in 2015 and pushing for legislative reforms through mechanisms such as government-civil society consultations and humanitarian policy forums. UNHCR Korea has engaged with civil society partners to promote humanitarian priorities within the Republic of Korea's ODA framework—particularly through communication efforts and capacity-building initiatives. However, the strategic role of civil society as a mediator and advocate in humanitarian policy has not been fully capitalised on. As a result, there remains untapped potential to leverage CSOs as influential actors in shaping sectoral, programmatic, and budgetary priorities—an approach that could also help sustain or expand access to public funding streams.⁶⁷ More recently, collaboration between UNHCR and the Republic of Korea's NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC) has included capacity-building initiatives for member organisations, information sharing and operational support in KOICA's NGO-targeted projects, but these remain nascent steps toward a more inclusive approach.

78. **MoFA funding decisions are heavily influenced by the assessments of overseas diplomatic missions regarding humanitarian needs.** According to the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC), and MoFA's ODA policy directives, the Republic of Korea intends to strengthen field-level decision-making by institutionalising regular ODA consultative meetings at the country level (Government of Korea, 2025). Diplomatic missions not only play a key role in programming but also are mandated to select monitoring projects and report annually to the CIDC, further embedding their influence in funding decisions.⁶⁸ While there is now growing evidence that UNHCR Korea has engaged with embassies and KOICA country offices to respond to the Republic of Korea's decentralised, field-based ODA architecture to maximise emerging opportunities for partnership and public funding since 2024, respondents expressed concern that UNHCR Korea faced challenges in direct engagement with recipient institutions.
79. **While UNHCR Korea is recognised by public sector stakeholders as a credible and knowledgeable partner, there is a demand for more structured and proactive engagement to strengthen institutional collaboration.** Stakeholder interviews highlighted UNHCR Korea's strong reputation as a credible and authoritative actor in refugee protection and knowledge dissemination. According to interviews, the overall communication, partnership, and coordination between MoFA's Human Rights and Social Affairs Division⁶⁹ and UNHCR Korea is perceived as satisfactory and well-established, despite the dual communication channel divided between the Human Rights and Social Affairs Division and the Development Cooperation Division. However, there is a discernible demand from interviewees for more structured, proactive forms of engagement, suggesting a need for UNHCR Korea to be more present, with more frequent touchpoints and forward-looking discussions to develop the best possible partnership proposals, according to the specific and evolving needs of MoFA and KOICA.

⁶⁷ Despite the abovementioned, UNHCR Korea has been engaging strategically with various civil society to co-advocate for the advancement of humanitarian priorities within the Republic of Korea government. Most recently, UNHCR co-hosted a seminar with KCOC titled "Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict-affected and Fragile States: Reality and Future Direction" organised by the National Assembly's Global Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Forum to raise awareness and promote humanitarian space within the legislators and the government. The bipartisan event drew over 50 participants, including six legislators, alongside representatives from MOFA, KOICA, civil society organisations and the academia. UNHCR Korea has annually organised or participated in public-facing advocacy events commemorating the World Refugee Day, World Humanitarian Day and the Development Cooperation Week with KCOC and government counterparts. Such efforts aimed to raise awareness and build public support towards expanding political and financial focus on humanitarian assistance within Republic of Korea ODA. Additionally, UNHCR Korea continued to foster partnerships with various civil society actors in the Republic of Korea in line with the Republic of Korea government's sustained policy endeavours to incorporate and capacitate the Republic of Korea civil society within the humanitarian fora. Since 2014, UNHCR Korea facilitated 33 capacity development programmes through the Regional Emergency Preparedness Centre (eCentre), inviting 181 humanitarian workers from the government and the civil society. In parallel, UNHCR Korea also organised webinar series on number of humanitarian emergencies tailored for civil society members, and facilitation of two secondments of NGO staff in partnership with World Vision Korea to UNHCR Ecuador to promote mutual understanding and strengthen partnerships.

⁶⁸ MoFA (Accessed April 25, 2025)

⁶⁹ MoFA is UNHCR's primary partner on government funding and political partnerships

80. **UNHCR Korea's public engagement lacks sufficient alignment with stakeholders' interest in emotionally resonant communication approaches that humanise the refugee experience.**⁷⁰ Public organisations are not necessarily confined to formality; as demonstrated in the case study of *Go Ik Ha*⁷¹, public institutions can also adopt soft, empathetic approaches that resonate emotionally. External stakeholders expressed reservations about UNHCR's approach, which did not effectively humanise its messaging or succeed in mobilising broad-based public support, and which stood out in contrast with the *Go Ik Ha*'s empathetic approach. Since public perception significantly influences public funding and reflects societal prioritisation of refugee issues, this gap might carry tangible implications. In this context, the role of private sector engagement gains prominence, not only as a complementary funding source but also as a conduit for amplifying public awareness. Government stakeholders have shown interest in expanding this dimension, particularly through the use of Goodwill Ambassadors, a practice that has contributed meaningfully to public discourse and visibility of refugee issues.⁷²
81. **To date, UNHCR and other United Nations agencies have had limited opportunities to contribute to the formulation of the medium- and long-term national development cooperation strategies.** As the Republic of Korea begins formulating its forthcoming 4th Strategic Plan for Development Cooperation (2026-2030),⁷³ the Request for Proposal (RfP) for drafting the plan has been issued to a government-affiliated think tank, which is tasked with conducting the policy design and stakeholder analysis. However, the RfP does not explicitly require consultation with international organisations, raising concerns about the potential exclusion of key multilateral actors such as UNHCR from this foundational stage. This procedural omission was seen previously in the 2021 revision of the "Multilateral Organisation Cooperation Strategy," where CSOs were consulted, but UN organisations were not included. Given the strategic significance of the 4th Strategic Plan as a five-year framework guiding the Republic of Korea's global development priorities and funding allocations, there is a timely opportunity for UNHCR to deepen its understanding of the policy formation cycle and proactively explore avenues for informal engagement.⁷⁴
82. **Partnerships with religious and humanitarian NGOs exhibit high alignment on values, particularly around human rights and peace objectives, but only moderate alignment on operational aspects due to a desire for more local engagement and flexibility.**⁷⁵ In particular, the benefits of the partnership between UNHCR and KCRP were acknowledged by stakeholders from both organisations .. The values of altruism and humanitarianism embodied by UNHCR Korea staff and leaders are also valued and appreciated by KCRP members. They foresee further progress on refugee-related efforts, particularly through religious media, which are very influential in the Republic of Korea (e.g. TV channels, newspapers, and radio). On the other hand, the alignment with the corporate sector is less robust. This lower alignment is attributed to the corporate sector's focus on domestic and safe causes, which often do not align with UNHCR's mission, centred around refugee protection and support.
83. **The partnerships cultivated by UNHCR Korea with legal aid organisations are closely aligned with its strategic objectives to enhance refugee protection within the Republic of Korea's legal and socio-political environment.** Through its renewed three-year agreement with civil society actors—including KORRIN, Rainbow Refugee Network, the Korean Bar Association, and We Friends—UNHCR has expanded the national legal aid infrastructure to support forcibly displaced and stateless individuals, particularly in high-risk contexts such as detention and airport interception. These collaborations

⁷⁰ Interviews, IPSOS. (2023) Country Report: South Korea - UNHCR Brand Measurement, UNHCR surveys.

⁷¹ See full case study in Appendix 13.

⁷² The actor Jung Woo-sung served as the first the Republic of Korea UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador from 2014 until his resignation in 2024, citing backlash over his advocacy for refugees (The Korea Times, 2024).

⁷³ On December 17, 2024, the Republic of Korea and CSOs held the 9th Government-Civil Society Policy Council on International Development Cooperation. The Office for Government Policy Coordination, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Finance, KOICA, Export-Import Bank of Korea, Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation, Korea Civil Society Forum on International Development Cooperation, Good Neighbors, World Vision Korea, and Save the Children were in attendance. (Donor Tracker, 2024)

⁷⁴ At the time of writing this report, shifts are taking place in the Republic of Korea's Official Development Assistance and humanitarian policies that may affect priorities and budget allocations as they were envisaged and communicated to the evaluation at the beginning of 2025.

⁷⁵ See previous section on Relevance.

contribute directly to UNHCR's strategic priorities of strengthening RSD, addressing institutional deficits in refugee law comprehension, and safeguarding against refoulement.

84. **UNHCR's efforts to engage with media and influencers in the Republic of Korea have faced challenges due to the highly commercialised nature of influencer marketing, which often requires fees that conflict with the organisation's financial policies. Despite these barriers, UNHCR has prioritised alternative outreach strategies** (e.g. high-visibility face-to-face fundraising campaigns on major streets across the Republic of Korea). Strategies to facilitate active media engagement have been implemented, as exemplified by the MoU with Yonhap News Agency, partnership with Fortune Korea, etc. Actor Jung Woo-sung's longstanding role as Goodwill Ambassador has been widely recognised as one of UNHCR's most successful public awareness campaigns. His resignation in 2024 was consistently noted by stakeholders as having left a gap in UNHCR's communication efforts, with many suggesting that recruiting another high-profile figure could be beneficial.⁷⁶ Social media analysis indicates that since 2018, fan-run accounts have constituted a significant portion of UNHCR's follower base, and the Ambassador's resignation attracted notable online attention. UNHCR has also adapted to the evolving digital landscape by allocating approximately 50% of its communication budget to digital activities.

KEQ3. For communication and resource mobilisation, how aligned were the Republic of Korea's multi-year strategies with each other, and with the regional and global ones? (Relevance)

85. The alignment of UNHCR Korea's multi-year strategies with each other, as well as with regional and global strategies, demonstrates a coherent and evolving approach to communication and resource mobilisation. The strategies also emphasise digital transformation, innovative communication methods, and structured approaches to donor engagement and resource mobilisation, ensuring a comprehensive and integrated approach. Although it is not currently a priority issue, due diligence is identified in corporate strategies as a key approach and process for managing reputational risks. Its importance is likely to grow in light of the potential expansion of private sector resource mobilisation in the Republic of Korea.

Country Multi-Year Strategies⁷⁷

86. **The analysis of the UNHCR Korea's multi-year strategies in terms of communication and resource mobilisation shows that the strategies are well-aligned with each other.** Each subsequent strategy builds on the previous ones, introducing new elements and expanding the scope to enhance UNHCR's impact and effectiveness. The consistent focus on government contributions, private sector engagement, capacity building, and climate crisis engagement demonstrates a coherent and evolving approach to supporting refugees in the Republic of Korea. The strategies also reflect a growing emphasis on digital transformation, innovative communication methods, and structured approaches to donor engagement and resource mobilisation.
87. **Across UNHCR Korea's three planning frameworks, a clear division of labour emerges.** The two programmatic strategies (UNHCR Programmatic Strategy for 2022, UNHCR Programmatic Multi-Year

⁷⁶ Interviewees suggested the name of Daehoon Lee (an Olympic Taekwondo medallist) as a Friend of UNHCR, to fill the gap left by Jung Woo-sung.

⁷⁷ UNHCR Programmatic Strategy for 2022, UNHCR Programmatic MYS for 2023-2025, UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy 2021-2025.

Strategy for 2023-2025) concentrate on sustaining and widening governmental support while sharpening operational capacities, whereas the 2021-25 PSP strategy is tightly focused on unlocking and professionalising market-driven funding streams. All three documents recognise the Republic of Korea's government as an anchor donor to UNHCR (consistently > US\$ 20 million a year) and echo the importance of capacity building through long-standing partnerships with the NGO Council of the Republic of Korea and the eCentre. They also share an emphasis on data-driven fundraising decisions, hybrid public-engagement campaigns, and collaboration with KOICA on climate-sensitive programming.

88. **In contrast, the UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy 2021-2025 treats the Republic of Korea as a growth engine for global private income.** UNHCR Korea already ranks third worldwide, supplying about a tenth of UNHCR's private funding, so the plan centres on sophisticated donor-experience management—digital infrastructure, lifetime-value optimisation, and business models for IG (6:4 acquisition-to-income ratio) and PPH pipelines (it gives less attention to climate action, instead prioritising leadership resourcing and solutions to domestic legal barriers that hamper fundraising).

[Country Multi-year Strategies and Resource Mobilisation Regional Strategy](#)).⁷⁸

89. **The analysis of the country level and the regional strategies shows that they are well-aligned in their goals and approaches to communication and resource mobilisation.** The regional strategy provides the necessary strategic guidance, technical support, and advocacy to enhance the effectiveness of country-level efforts and ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to communication and resource mobilisation, layering a plan that moves from consolidating public-sector support to scaling diversified, data-driven resource mobilisation while embedding regional solidarity.
90. **The Joined-Up Approach continues to prioritise government contributions and significantly expands the private sector engagement model, which is in line with both country and global strategies.** The Joined-Up Approach to Resource Mobilisation in Asia-Pacific (2025–2027) is strongly aligned with the UNHCR Korea Country Strategies (2022, 2023–2025, 2021–2025 PSP), RBAP Strategy (2023–2024), and relevant Global Strategies (Global Communications Strategy, Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025, and UNHCR Private Sector Fundraising Strategy 2018–2025), as it mirrors prior strategic emphasis on strengthening public engagement, hybrid campaigns, media responsiveness, and digital transformation, advancing these by mandating proactive, donor-focused communications closely integrated with resource mobilisation efforts.
91. **Country and regional strategies treat the Republic of Korea's government as a cornerstone donor,** noting a steady ODA contribution of ≥US\$ 2 billion a year (peaking at US\$3.16 billion in 2023), (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2023). The regional strategy broadens this lens, positioning the Republic of Korea alongside Australia, China and Japan as one of the four priority state partners whose largesse must be nurtured to meet broader regional needs.
92. **Capacity building is a central theme in every strategy analysed. It is implemented locally through the Republic of Korea's NGO Council and eCentre, internally through PSP's leadership skills focus, and regionally with technical support to country teams and enhanced inter-agency coordination.** Parallel investments in data-driven fundraising, hybrid public campaigns, and digital infrastructure, such as Synergy platform and regional digital capacity-building (e.g. training country teams to produce localised content), aim to sharpen decision-making and engagement across all levels. These efforts are designed also to support developing protection strategies in partnership with regional entities to include forcibly displaced people in the national census.

⁷⁸ Regional Bureau ASO ABC, Multi-year 2023-2024 (Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations) (UNHCR, 2024c), A Joined-Up Approach to Resource Mobilisation in Asia-Pacific (2024-2026), (UNHCR, 2024a).

93. **The two programmatic strategies (and KOICA partnerships) integrate climate-smart programming, whereas the regional strategy seeks to galvanise global forums such as the GRF for climate-related pledges.** The Programmatic MYS for 2023-2025 also introduces a deliberate advocacy track with MOFA, KOICA and lawmakers and calls for extra staff to sustain this outreach, mirrored regionally by staffing expansions to service multi-country priorities.
94. Only the UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy 2021-2025 focuses on donor experience, building loyalty, improving visibility for broadly earmarked contributions and crafting legal work-arounds to ease fundraising constraints, while the regional framework pledges timely, high-quality communications products to recognise major donors.

[Country Multi-year Strategies and Global Strategies \(Global Communications, Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025, Private Sector Fundraising\)](#)⁷⁹

95. **The analysis of the Global Communications Strategy shows that the strategy positions UNHCR to “lead the narrative” and mobilise empathy, reinforcing the hybrid campaigns and Goodwill Ambassador model used in the Republic of Korea, while the Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025 and the UNHCR Private Sector Fundraising 2018-2025 strategies provide blueprints for mutually beneficial corporate partnerships, best-in-class donor stewardship, cross-national capacity building and significant talent investment.** The Global Communication Strategy's creative process and tactics, such as leveraging multimedia content, engaging with influencers, and using data-driven approaches, are mirrored in the country-level strategies' focus on innovative communication methods and digital-driven infrastructure. The Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025 also supports the communication efforts by providing external communication and advocacy opportunities for partners. This aligns with the country-level strategies' emphasis on engaging the Republic of Korea corporate philanthropy and private sector actors for shared-value partnerships. The thematic priorities of Help, Hope, and Home in the Global Communication Strategy aligns with the country-level strategies' emphasis on supporting forcibly displaced and stateless people empowerment, gender equality, and peaceful coexistence.
96. **The analysis of the UNHCR Korea Strategy for Private Sector Fundraising 2018-2025 shows a strong alignment with the Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025.** The UNHCR Strategy for Private Sector Fundraising 2018-2025 focuses on increasing government contributions and mobilising resources from the private sector. The global UNHCR Strategy for Private Sector Fundraising 2018-2025 also outlines a mix of income streams from IG and private sector partners and identifies key priorities such as communications, digital transformation, supporter experience, and fundraising innovation. The country-level strategies reflect this by emphasising the importance of individual donors and corporate partnership and their focus on innovative communication methods, digital-driven infrastructure, and enhancing donor experience and loyalty. On the other hand, the Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025 aims to build robust, mutually beneficial partnerships with corporations, foundations, and philanthropists, and outlines income streams from corporations, foundations, and private philanthropy. In contrast, the country-level strategy emphasises engaging the Republic of Korea philanthropy and private sector actors for shared-value partnerships.
97. **Due diligence on private sector partners is an area where there is a gap between UNHCR's global strategic frameworks and the CO's PSP strategy.** The need to conduct due diligence on all collaborations with the private sector through PSP is reflected in the UNHCR Private Partnerships & Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025 (at the corporate level) and has been reflected in a new Due Diligence Administrative Instruction, updated in 2019. The importance of the due diligence process for a more strategic screening of optimal partners and partnerships, with the aim of protecting UNHCR's reputation, led to the creation of a dedicated unit at HQ in Copenhagen. The CO's strategy and planning

⁷⁹ Global Communications Strategy, Private Partnerships and Philanthropy Strategic Framework 2018-2025, UNHCR Strategy for Private Sector Fundraising 2018-2025.

documents do not include guidance on conducting due diligence at a time when funding through corporations is moderate but growing and, according to interviews, the support that the Regional Bureau can offer in this area is limited by available resources.⁸⁰

KEQ4. How efficiently has UNHCR Korea utilised UNHCR’s resources at the country and regional levels to maximise domestic protection and global fundraising and partnership outcomes in the Republic of Korea? (Efficiency)

98. UNHCR Korea has demonstrated notable efficiency in leveraging limited resources in its efforts to overcome contextual challenges related to the delivery of protection services, sustain donor engagement, and build institutional partnerships. While lean in staffing, UNHCR Korea benefits from institutional continuity and local knowledge, which contribute to operational stability. However, key staffing gaps, the reliance on interns (23% of the CO workforce), or the delays caused by regional validation layers deemed to be of little use and an organisational culture described as cautious, occasionally limited responsiveness to advocacy and resource mobilisation opportunities.
99. Programmatically, a high proportion of unearmarked funding has enhanced flexibility; the allocation of 76% of the budget to STAFF and ABOD is not aligned with recommended corporate ratios; however, it reflects UNHCR Korea’s strategic emphasis on advocacy rather than direct service delivery or operational programming. Legal support from HQ was consistently effective, whereas engagement with the Regional Bureau proved less efficient in legal matters due to added communication layers and limited capacity. Despite these constraints, regional resources—such as the Regional Training Centre in Bangkok and targeted cooperation on RSD training—contributed meaningfully to knowledge exchange and capacity-building. Coordination between the ER and PSP teams has improved but remains siloed in strategic planning, limiting opportunities for integrated donor engagement. Additionally, capacity shortfalls in the PPH team and outreach workload bottlenecks have constrained the full realisation of fundraising objectives.

UNHCR Korea budget evolution

100. **Between 2022 and 2024,⁸¹ UNHCR Korea experienced a significant growth in its needs-based budgets (OP), with an increase of 62%, while available funds operation level (OL) grew by only 27% during the same period.** This trend highlights a notable decline in the rate of available funds (OL/OP), which decreased from 94% in 2022 to 74% in 2024, underscoring a growing tension between planned budgetary needs (OP) and actual fund availability (OL). Nevertheless, the gap between the planned budget (OP) and the available funds (OL) was comparatively narrow at 15%, especially when contrasted with other operations.⁸² Specifically, among the three budget categories analysed, those

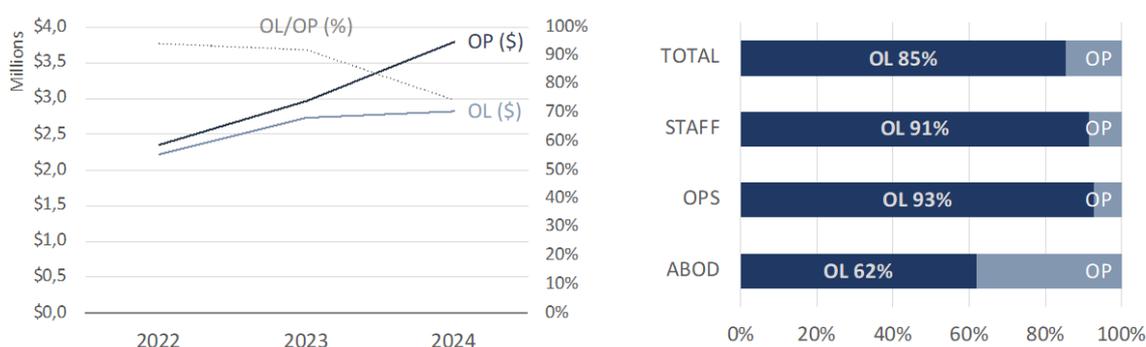
Figure 2. Evolution of needs-based budget (OP), available funds (OL) and ratio of available funds (OL/OP) & ratio of available funds (OL/OP) – 2022–2024

⁸⁰ The Regional Bureau ASO MYS 2023–2024 (internal document for Country/MCO Operations) highlights the risk that insufficient due diligence and limited diversity in partnerships may negatively affect the funding of UNHCR programmes in the region. Interviews with UNHCR staff confirmed the existence of due diligence challenges and noted a misalignment between UNHCR’s objectives and the interests of some corporate actors. Respondents suggested the development of a Korea-specific due diligence strategy to help address barriers linked to the defence sector.

⁸¹ The data presented below (Figures 3 & 4) are taken from the documents *KOR Budget_Download 2022-2025 for 2023 and 2024* and *KOR_OP OL Exp data for 2022*. The data from *KOR Budget_Download 2022-2025* do not specify the OPS budget line for 2022. Nb. Organisationally, this has been superseded by current events.

⁸² See previous UNHCR Country Strategy Evaluations.

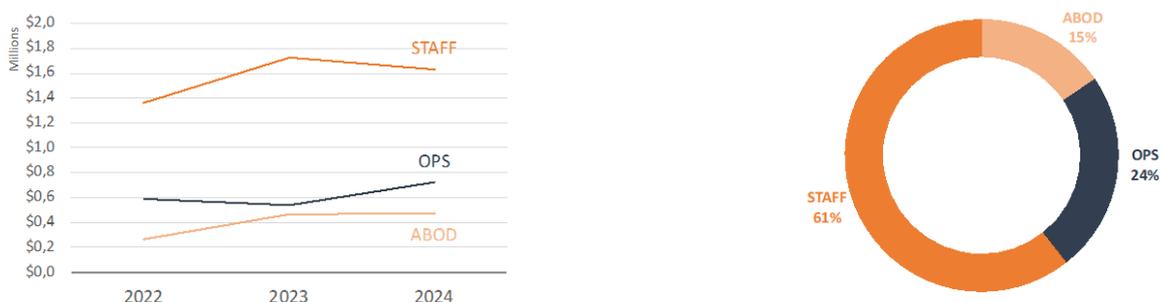
dedicated to personnel (STAFF) and operational activities (OPS)⁸³ achieved coverage rates exceeding 90% of estimated needs (91% and 93%, respectively, as shown in Figure 2 below).



Source: KOR Budget_Download 2022-2025; KOR_OP OL Exp data

101. **One of the major characteristics of operation’s budget lies in the distribution of resources between STAFF and ABOD and those allocated to operational activities (OPS).** Although funds allocated to operational activities (OPS) increased (+22%) over the 2022–2024 period, there was an imbalance across budget lines, as 76% of available funds were allocated to STAFF and ABOD expenses (see Figure 3 below). This ratio between STAFF / ABOD and OPS exceeds the recommended maximum threshold established by UNHCR, set at 40%. In this context, the larger proportion of the budget allocated to staff costs is understandable, given the operation’s emphasis on advocacy and technical engagement with national partners and institutions.

Figure 3. Evolution (\$) and share (%) of available funds (OL) by budget line -2022-2024



Source: KOR Budget_Download 2022-2025; KOR_OP OL Exp data

102. **Between 2022 and 2024, the allocation of available funds (OL) closely matched operational priorities,** with 80% of the available funds directed to the outcome protection (52%), and communications and partnership-strengthening (28%), areas that also recorded an average budget increase of around 90%. In parallel, 12% of resources were channelled into forcibly displaced and stateless persons empowerment projects, whose envelope rose by 141% over the same period.

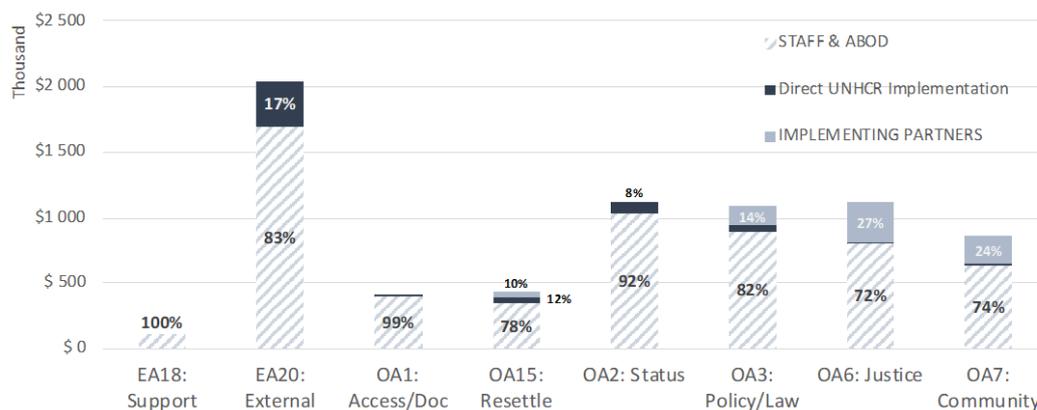
103. **For the period 2023-2024⁸⁴, available funds for operational budget line (OPS) have been allocated between direct implementation (44%) and implementation through partners (56%).** Of the funds allocated for direct implementation, 61% was allocated to communication and partnership strengthening (Enabling Area “External”) and, to a lesser extent, 15% to refugee status determination.

⁸³ The operations (OPS) category covers the costs of provision of goods and services to forcibly displaced and stateless persons through activities implemented directly by UNHCR and/or partners funded by UNHCR to implement projects (excluding UNHCR’s own staff and administrative costs).

⁸⁴ For 2022, the COMPASS data available only shows STAFF and ABOD budget lines at the level of available funds (OL).

Through partners, operational funds were mainly spent on legal assistance (43%), projects to strengthen the empowerment of forcibly displaced persons and refugees (30%) and, to a lesser extent, initiatives promoting their inclusion (21%). The budget allocation among the different outcomes reflects the existing legal assistance needs for access to asylum and is consistent with the priorities and objectives defined in the country strategy, as shown in the figure 4 below.

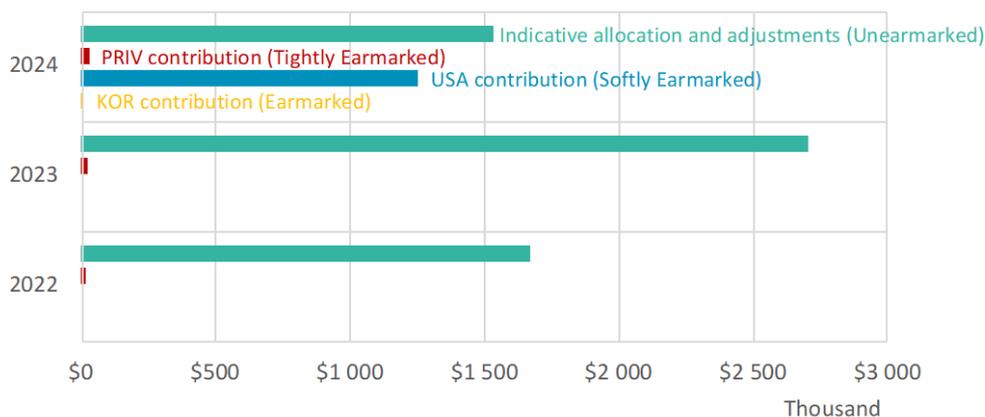
Figure 4. Budget distribution along Outcome Areas by budget line and implementation type – 2023-2024



Source: KOR Budget_Download 2022-2025;

104. **Between 2021 and 2024, UNHCR Korea raised approximately US\$ 333,9 million globally in support of UNHCR** (Donor Funding Overview 2021-2024). This performance has not been translated into funding for the CO during a period in which UNHCR Korea has faced difficulties in securing dedicated funding for its country strategy.⁸⁵
105. **A high proportion of unearmarked and softly earmarked funding between 2022 and 2024 provided UNHCR Korea with substantial flexibility to allocate resources to evolving priorities, while easing the pressure of tight donor-specific accountability requirements.** Over this period, 82% of the available funds fell into these more flexible categories, enabling more responsive and strategic programming. By contrast, tightly earmarked contributions accounted for only 19% of overall funds (US\$ 1.3 million out of US\$ 7.2 million). In 2022 and 2023, earmarked funding was particularly low—just 1% of the total—at US\$ 14,655 and US\$ 23,278, respectively. A notable shift occurred in 2024, when earmarked contributions rose to 46% of available funds, driven largely by the United States, which provided 94% of that year’s earmarked support (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5. CO funding by donor and type of contribution – 2022-2024

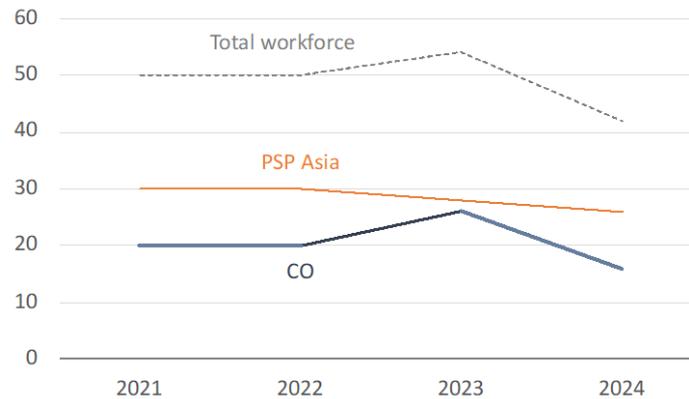


⁸⁵ Nb. As an organisation, donor capitals raise funds for other UNHCR operations; funds raised in one country are not necessarily translated into a budget allocation for that CO, but for all offices, including Europe, Japan, et al.

UNHCR Korea CO workforce

106. **In the Republic of Korea, UNHCR’s workforce is distributed between two cost centres: the CO and the Private Sector Partnership Asia (PSP).** From 2021 to 2024, the CO accounted for an average of 40% of the total workforce. During the same period, overall staffing declined by 16% —down 20% in the CO and 13% in the PSP—after a 30% surge in CO staff between 2022 and 2023 (see Figure 6 below).

Figure 6. Changes in workforce by cost centre – 2021-2024



Source: KOR Funding Update CO ROK_2021-2024;

107. **Between 2022 and 2025, UNHCR Korea underwent an evolution in staffing structure, strengthening its dual mandate in protection and external engagement.**⁸⁶ In 2022, the office maintained a relatively lean structure, with standard administrative and communications functions evident but limited role specification in either public fundraising or private sector engagement. By 2023, an External Relations Associate (G6, TA)⁸⁷ and Senior Communications Associate (G7, TA)⁸⁸ had been formally added to the structure, indicating an expansion of outreach and donor communication functions. These additions suggested a growing emphasis on external visibility and relationship management, potentially supporting both public fundraising and policy dialogue. The most pronounced changes are visible in the 2025 organisational chart, where the structure shows functional differentiation and vertical integration of key roles.⁸⁹

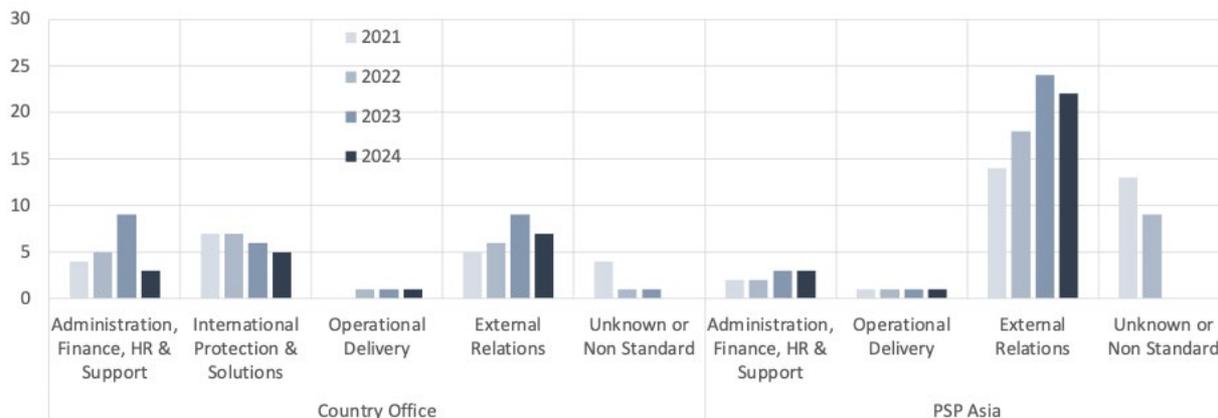
⁸⁶ UNHCR CO organisational charts.

⁸⁷ General Service (G) on level 6 and with a Temporary Appointment contract (TA).

⁸⁸ General Service (G) on level 7, with a Temporary Appointment contract (TA) and on Special Leave Without Pay (SLWP)

⁸⁹ UNHCR Korea organisational charts.

Figure 7. Workforce distribution by functional groups in the CO and PSP Asia teams – 2021-2024



Source: KOR_Workforce Data_2021-2024;

108. **Overall, this evolution in the organisational chart shows a strategic deepening of the office’s capacity in both protection and external relations, aligned with UNHCR Korea’s increased reliance on public and private partnerships and its positioning within a highly developed donor context.** The organisational changes introduced in PSP and the expansion of the communications team suggest a deliberate shift toward professionalising and scaling outreach and fundraising functions. Meanwhile, the inclusion of a Programme Associate in the protection unit's organisational chart (2025) reflects a continued commitment to substantive protection work in a challenging national environment.
109. **Given the institutional and socio-cultural context of the Republic of Korea and the organisational chart of UNHCR Korea, the presence of a Country Representative with an in-depth understanding of the local context is recognised as an important aspect of the operation.** As the Country Representative is supported by a capable and stable ER team, this constitutes a key strategic asset with multiple positive knock-on effects in terms of the efficiency of UNHCR's public partnership efforts in the Republic of Korea, improving the results of communication efforts and partnership management with national institutions.
110. **In contrast to other organisations that face drags on operational efficiency resulting from frequent staff turnover, UNHCR’s stable team structure supported long-term relationship-building and institutional memory.** The ER team is led by an Associate ER Officer, with a compact team of two: a Senior ER Assistant and an ER Associate. However, the vacant position of Deputy Representative, a key position that was supposed to oversee external relations, remained a crucial gap that impacted the team’s ability to efficiently and fully leverage strategic opportunities.⁹⁰ While smaller in size compared to other UN agencies, the UNHCR ER team benefits from continuity in personnel, positively contributing to overall efficiency.
111. **Additionally, the overall CO workforce remained relatively stable between 2021 and 2024,** with only one significant staffing spike in March and April 2023. A solid workforce is indicated by 61% of Fixed Term Appointment (FTA) contracts and 5% of Indefinite Contracts, suggesting relatively low turnover among permanent staff (UNHCR and Country Office, 2024). However, nearly a quarter of the workforce comprises internship contracts (23% of the CO team), which inherently have high turnover and thus counteract overall stability, posing challenges to information and process continuity.
112. **The evolution of the UNHCR Korea organisational culture within the CO holds significant potential to enhance the efficient use of local resources.** Interviews showed a deeply embedded

⁹⁰ Nb. This post has been subsequently abolished. There is a new Deputy Representative (Protection) post that was established in its stead.

institutional commitment among staff, characterised by high levels of expertise, professionalism, and long tenure. However, this strength is tempered by a prevailing organisational culture that tends toward conservatism and risk aversion. While such an approach may safeguard the organisation from reputational risks, it can also constrain UNHCR's ability to respond swiftly and assertively to emerging opportunities or advocacy needs. Key informants indicated that this was notably illustrated in the 2018 case where the MoJ introduced a mandatory drug test for refugees. According to interviews, UNHCR adopted a more cautious approach, choosing not to prioritise the issue — a different approach to that taken by other agencies. This divergence in responses between UN agencies suggests a difficult balance between the choices involved in maintaining diplomatic neutrality and in exercising principled advocacy.⁹¹

113. There are signs that organisational learning and improved internal collaboration are emerging.

For the first time, an office retreat was held in January of 2025 to share annual planning and provide a comprehensive overview of upcoming activities, whereas previous staff retreats had focused primarily on team building. Working Groups were created for events, on digital, joint preparation to the Refugee Day, leading to continuous exchange between staff being in the same working group. This marked a cultural shift toward greater transparency and collective ownership of the annual agenda. The integration of communication staff into PSP in 2024 was another significant move that interviewed individuals highlighted as aimed at improving consistency and synergies, aligning with initiatives previously recorded in annual reports, such as joint coordination of communications strategy with Protection and PSP, and collaboration on donor visibility planning.⁹² These developments show an increasing awareness within the Seoul office of the need for systemic collaboration, one that transcends functional silos and prioritises unified messaging and stakeholder engagement.

Protection team

114. Despite chronic understaffing and limited resources,⁹³ UNHCR Korea's protection work has been widely recognised, particularly in building strong networks with civil society and government stakeholders to advocate for refugee rights and provide legal support. From 2021 to 2024, key positions within the Protection Unit remained vacant for extended periods⁹⁴, leading to administrative delays and an increased workload for existing staff, which constrained the unit's capacity to meet the growing needs of forcibly displaced populations. In 2022, UNHCR prioritised funding for local partners who typically operate with minimal financial support and rely heavily on voluntary contributions; however, budget limitations continued to restrict the scale of implemented projects. Despite these challenges, the unit demonstrated a high level of operational efficiency by working with only eight partners in 2024⁹⁵ and managing a modest partner budget of US\$ 411,629 (UNHCR, 2024c), while maintaining credible protection practices through staff continuity and the effective integration of local knowledge.

⁹¹ See for example, (Han et al., 2017); (Human Rights Watch, 2019); (Global Detention Project, 2020); (Amnesty International, 2022)

⁹² Both the 2022 and 2023 Annual Results Reports highlighted the importance of a carefully coordinated communications strategy in close consultation with Protection and PSP (2022) and noted that a proactive communications strategy coordinated by communications and staff, PSP and Protection is essential to improving public perceptions (2023). Interviews also highlighted that the integration of communication into PSP reflected an internal shift from thinking by unit to thinking as "us together", aiming to improve coherence in activity planning and synergy across units.

⁹³ At the time of writing, according to information provided by UNHCR, budget cuts in 2025 have led to further reductions in staff numbers.

⁹⁴ The UNHR Protection Unit in UNHCR Korea is comprised of a Senior Protection Officer (SPO, international staff) who supervises a Programme Associate (technically this position belongs to a different team but is under SPO supervision: this position also conducted some Protection team functions) and an Associate Legal Officer, who in turns supervises a Legal Associate and 2 Protection Assistants The SPO position was vacant for almost 1 year during the past 2 years. The Legal Associate position was vacant for a year, during which the previous Protection Associate position was changed to Legal Associate and recruitment thereof took place (both positions are now filled, the former with a temporary contract (SIBA).

⁹⁵ Advocates for Public Interest Law (APIL), Duroo Association for Public Interest Law (Duroo), GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation (GongGam), Korean Bar Association Legal Aid Foundation (KBALAF), Migration to Asia Peace (MAP, Homointer, Gipum Nanum International (Gipum Nanum), Migrant Health Association in Korea We Friends (We Friends), Korea Migrant Human Rights Center Wahha (2024).

115. **UNHCR Korea has effectively used resources at the HQ level to support legal advocacy efforts and ensure consistency with UNHCR's global protection mandate.** In particular, the Division of International Protection (DIP) has been described by the interviewees as a reliable and expert source of legal guidance, particularly in reviewing and affirming key legal documents, such as *amicus curiae* briefs and advisory opinions submitted to national institutions.

Fundraising and partnerships team

116. **UNHCR Korea has been efficiently utilising regional resources to enhance its operations, benefiting from strong collaborations, training programmes, and international engagements.** One of the key strengths of UNHCR Korea's approach is its close and productive relationship with HQ and various regional bureaus. Staff mentioned in interviews that UNHCR Korea systemically and frequently sought information, guidance and support, which helped to strengthen its strategic planning and operational planning. This broad institutional alignment facilitated a continuous flow of information, and technical guidance which, in turn, reinforced the CO's capacity for informed decision-making and adaptive planning.

117. **Another significant resource leveraged by UNHCR Korea is the Regional Training Centre in Bangkok, which has been much appreciated by external stakeholders.** This facility serves as a hub for capacity-building activities, enabling national CSOs members to enhance their skills, stay updated on global agendas and improve their ability to respond to refugee-related challenges. The use of this centre is considered to contribute to the professional growth of personnel, ensuring that they are well-equipped to handle complex refugee issues. This enables UNHCR to share its expertise with local CSOs, to foster dialogue with these CSOs, and for them to be more aligned with UNHCR in supporting forcibly displaced and stateless persons. However, some stakeholders mentioned that small organisations in the Republic of Korea, which lack the financial resources to send their staff to Bangkok, cannot benefit from the Regional Training Centre. At the request of UNHCR Korea, participation in delegations to Thailand and Geneva reflects a deliberate strategy to deepen cross-border collaboration and institutional learning. These engagements have served as critical platforms for knowledge exchange, enabling the organisation to strengthen its ties with key stakeholders.

118. **UNHCR Korea PSP personnel perceive collaboration with the Regional Bureau as very positive and efficient, as there is regular consultation and support from the specialised resources. However, the lack of specialised profiles in due diligence hampers the provision of regional support to the CO on this issue.** The support of the RBAP greatly facilitates making proposals, checking on the funding space, and using available reports. Concerning due diligence, the Regional Bureau Strategy 2023-2024 identifies the lack of capacity as a risk that could have a negative impact on the funding of UNHCR programmes in the region. This is in line with the findings of the recent OIOS Audit of private sector engagement at the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (2024) and the recommendations of the Evaluation of UNHCR's Engagement with the Private Sector (2019).

119. **At CO level, internal unit collaboration has been strengthened, resulting in improved structural planning processes, including regular review meetings, a joint platform, and capacity-building retreats.** For instance, since August 2024, the Protection team and ER team have organised seminars through the "Sustainable Development and Humanitarian" platform. Additionally, to address conflict and vulnerability issues, UNHCR organised the Migration and Refugee Research Forum and initiated consultations with experts and researchers. This network also supports UBR.

120. **In terms of working processes, over the past few years, the units of the PSP department have been working in silos when it came to strategic planning⁹⁶.** Interviews indicate that, as recently as 2024, the annual PPH plan was drawn up by each of the officers in their own area, with no interaction with either Public Funding or Communications, and then submitted to their hierarchy (local and regional).

⁹⁶ See also section on Coordination between External relations and PSP units.

However, once the plan had already been drafted, sharing information and fostering discussion with PPH and PSP teams did occur, though this was more downstream than upstream.⁹⁷ This approach contrasts with the PPH Strategy 2018-2025, which called for coordinated planning across all functions.⁹⁸

121. **There have been critical PSP staff gaps that undermined overall effectiveness.** The difficulty in recruitment is not unique to UNHCR Korea but has been observed across the UN entities in the Republic of Korea and the region. UN contracts are not open-ended, while candidates are seeking stability; UN salary levels that are not sufficiently attractive, particularly for more senior positions, and the requirement for English language proficiency, all these explain the recruiting situation in the CO. As a result, certain functions could not be fulfilled (i.e. in the PPH team), and the ongoing recruitment approval process did not help.
122. **Recruiting issues affected the PPH team, hindering the achievement of significant gifts and partnerships.** PPH fundraising relies heavily on one-to-one personalised relationships, which are directly linked to HR capacity in terms of staff numbers, staff skills and alignment with donor cultures and profiles. By February 2025, three positions in UNHCR Korea were duly filled: one for individual major donors (seven months), one for corporate donors, and one for foundations and faith-based organisations (since November 2023 for the latter two positions). A review of the CO's staffing and organisational charts, along with discussions held with relevant teams, suggests that the PPH unit continues to lack senior-level expertise.⁹⁹
123. **In terms of capabilities to absorb the administrative workload inherent to the nature of PPH activities, with its links to UNHCR's operational mode and the flows of communication within UNHCR Korea, the current setup in income streams hinders the efficiency of PPH activities.** In the PPH unit, back-office activities (e.g. writing and disseminating proposals and reports) are the main task, together with the need for translations and interaction with numerous department-specific to UNHCR operations.¹⁰⁰ According to interviews, the time spent in the office compared to that allocated to external appointments was assessed to be very high, resulting in limited outbound activities towards prospects.

Coordination between ER and PSP teams

124. **While coordination between ER and PSP teams has improved, its full potential has yet to be achieved.** There are positive trends toward closer collaboration, including joint roadmaps and planning cycles aimed at promoting shared objectives. These early efforts have enhanced message coherence and campaign consistency across the two functions. However, interviewees noted differences in reporting lines, with PSP often operating independently, which complicated alignment and accountability. Planning systems between DER and PSP at HQ and regional levels are also not fully synchronised, which reflects a broader challenge seen in other operations and which is replicated in the UNHCR Korea office.
125. **Coordination efforts are further constrained by disparities in the organisational "culture" of each respective team.** PSP staff are marketing-, sales-, donor-engagement, and data-driven, where public funding professionals tend to be more international relations-oriented, and ER teams are expected to manage institutional donor relationships, such as with KOICA, requiring different skills and knowledge, such as policy fluency). Even so, successful examples of collaboration—such as integrated donor engagement, shared public campaigns, and aligned narratives, demonstrate the benefits of

⁹⁷ In terms of efficiency in the use of the PSP budget, and despite questions asked during the field visit, it was not possible to obtain answers. The situation of budget underspending(s) that was mentioned as a point of attention during one interview could not be explored. (See "Limitations" in Annex 4.7)

⁹⁸ See the PPH Strategic Framework 2018–2025, which underscores the need to work as one integrated team across functions and highlights that strong collaboration among internal stakeholders is essential to deliver the objectives of the strategy.

⁹⁹ It was not possible to assess the impact on the IG unit. During field visit data collection, the evaluation team was unable to interview members of the IG team.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. partnerships with the corporate sector require contacting many internal services such as legal, Gifts In Kind (GIK), data protection, etc.

improved coordination when it occurs. Despite these constraints, alignment is emerging, as PSP now contributes to ER-led initiatives like media campaigns that aim to inform and raise funds. The following Table 2 shows the levels of alignment and synergy with ER and PSP teams.

Table 2. Alignment, Synergy, and Outcome within ER and PSP teams

Area	Assessment	Reason
Strategic Alignment	Low to Moderate	Recognised need but planning systems and KPIs remain disconnected.
Operational Synergy	Limited	Collaboration happens ad hoc, not through integrated processes.
Impact on Outcomes	Suboptimal	Visibility, storytelling, and donor engagement suffer due to limited synergy and resource gaps.

KEQ5. To what extent have the processes and institutional mechanisms within UNHCR facilitated rapid adaptation to emerging opportunities and risks in partnerships and resource mobilisation? (Efficiency)

126. UNHCR Korea's institutional mechanisms have demonstrated a positive capacity to adapt to emerging opportunities and risks in partnerships and resource mobilisation. Strategic engagement at the senior level has proven effective during periods of political transition, notably in re-establishing key legislative relationships. The flexibility to reallocate budgets (e.g. from face-to-face to digital channels) and to submit earmarked proposals tailored to donor preferences has served as a critical adaptive capacity. Notable responsiveness was also demonstrated during the Ukraine crisis, where UNHCR was the first organisation to launch a campaign, resulting in strong digital fundraising performance. However, such examples remain the exception rather than the norm. Bureaucratic processes, delayed donor reporting, limitations in budget monitoring and limited working-level dialogue have constrained the ability to leverage evolving political contexts and funding windows.

127. From an organisational standpoint, internal systems such as COMPASS have supported structured partnership management aligned with UNHCR's results-based framework, but gaps in documentation, data completeness, and timeliness persist. Regular PSP analysis, donor perception surveys, and communication strategies have informed planning. However, corporate platforms like SYNERGY and WORKDAY have added procedural complexity rather than enabling efficiency, particularly hindering recruitment in competitive markets for PSP professionals. The flexibility to reallocate funds across investment areas and to propose earmarked projects in PPH has improved adaptability. UNHCR has developed meaningful partnerships with civil society, leveraging platforms such as the Korean Refugee Film Festival and the Korea Refugee Rights Network to channel resources and increase public visibility.

Timeliness of UNHCR's response to critical funding opportunities

128. **UNHCR has demonstrated mixed ability to respond to emergencies, particularly through tools like donor focal points and communication plans. However, its overall capacity to seize public fundraising opportunities, especially in crises like Ukraine or Yemen, which produced fundraising bumps, was limited by organisational bureaucracy and a reactive approach.** Indeed, PSP performed admirably in response to emergencies. The response to the Ukraine crisis

demonstrated the potential for fast, flexible engagement. For instance, in 2022 UNHCR Korea was the first organisation to launch the Ukraine Emergency campaign, deploying landing pages and a campaign plan within just one day of the greenlight. Donations from the Digital Ukraine Emergency campaign accounted for 44% of the total digital acquisition income.¹⁰¹ However, interviewees emphasised that such success remains the exception rather than the rule. Once the public awareness of these emergencies passed, funding returned to previous levels due to competing financial priorities within organisations. Respondents confirmed the data presented in UNHCR Korea's 2022 Annual Report, which noted that donations from online campaigns declined—mainly due to waning interest in the Ukraine emergency—and that donor retention remained a challenge. Several cases involved individuals who had unintentionally signed up for regular donations and subsequently withdrew upon realising this. From an organisational perspective, UNHCR's hierarchical organisational structure hinders communication and impacts the timeliness of decision-making. Additionally, limitations in budget planning and monitoring capabilities and some administrative processes contribute to this issue. An example of this is UNHCR's interaction with the Republic of Korea's government and soft-earmarked funding requests.

129. **To swiftly adapt to emerging opportunities in the Republic of Korea, UNHCR leveraged senior-level engagement mechanisms to re-establish relationships within the legislature. However, corporate procedures and bureaucracy at multiple layers have at times limited its agility in cultivating more sustainable working relationships** (e.g., MoFA, KOICA, lawmakers). UNHCR's engagement and interactions with institutions in the Republic of Korea reflected the organisation's ability to proactively respond to the evolving dynamics in partnerships and resource mobilisation during key changes in the national context. This re-engagement was both timely and responsive to the political context, positioning UNHCR to capitalise on windows of opportunity with the new administration ahead of the April 2024 elections. On the other hand, UNHCR often prioritised high-level calls and top-management meetings, placing less emphasis on cultivating regular, working-level dialogue, an approach that is essential for maintaining ongoing government relations and facilitating operational agility. Interviewees indicated that on certain occasions, UNHCR expected the Republic of Korea's government to act swiftly without fully accounting for its internal communication protocols and decision-making processes. In some cases, UNHCR's procedures as an international organisation did not align with local administrative practices, creating challenges in effectively navigating the public administration processes. This finding is not particular to a specific issue but overall, on cultural communication differences.
130. **UNHCR faced challenges in its monitoring, reporting, and evaluation capacities in the context of the Republic of Korea.** UNHCR's reports (e.g. biannual M&E reports) to public donors were sometimes delayed and submitted on an ad hoc basis (specifically reports from the COs in countries where projects were developed), placing strain on relationships with key partners such as KOICA. These shortcomings limited UNHCR Korea's ability to identify and act on new funding opportunities in a timely and strategic manner. For example, KOICA requires each project to comply with strict reporting and monitoring regulations, including mandatory bi-annual reports and recommended monthly progress updates. Compared to peer organisations, UNHCR is perceived as only moderately compliant with these expectations.
131. **UNHCR Korea and the Regional Bureau have worked together to adapt the global guidelines on resource mobilisation to the specificities of the private sector in the country.** However, greater capacity for rapid feedback from the field is needed to meet the needs of national companies. UNHCR has enjoyed limited success in adapting corporate strategies by developing localised strategies that reflect the Republic of Korea private sector donor behaviour, cultural expectations and the evolving corporate social responsibility priorities of companies in the Republic of Korea. However, UNHCR's ability to fully align with the expectations and needs of the private sector has at times been influenced by internal bureaucratic processes; occasional delays and differing timelines have

¹⁰¹ UNHCR Korea, Private Sector Partnerships Service. Year-End Annual Partnerships & Marketing Report 2022.

presented challenges in keeping pace with the fast-moving environment of corporate donors and partners.¹⁰²

Internal systems (monitoring, reporting, communications) support for streamlined and effective partnership management

132. **UNHCR's regular monitoring tools and *ad hoc* research have generated consistent data to support analysis and decision-making relevant to partnership management, although some gaps have been identified in annual PSP reporting.** Regular PSP reporting through annual and produced partnership and marketing reports provided annual analysis of progress and suggested actions, complemented by strategic documents focused on PSP planning and communications. However, the annual reports lack specific data on income from F2F and multichannel acquisition, digital transformation efforts, and staff recruitment, making it challenging to assess progress. Additionally, while UNHCR Korea Private Sector Partnerships Strategy 2021-2025 aims to increase brand awareness and trust through an audience communications strategy, this is only partially reflected in the reports. Other internal tools included the Donor Survey (UNHCR, 2020), which mapped donor perceptions, the Brand Equity Study (UNHCR, 2022b), which measured UNHCR's public reputation and perceptions on refugee issues, and the UNHCR 2020 National Survey and the 2024 IPSOS/UNHCR Global Survey,¹⁰³ which measured public opinion on refugees in the Republic of Korea. The operation piloted a Results Monitoring Survey (RMS)¹⁰⁴ in 2022, which enabled data collection and included a partnership with the Korea Refugee Rights Network. The Help UNHCR website, launched in 2022 and visited by over 40,000 users, provides information of interest for decision-making on programmes, advocacy, and communication related to the refugee population.
133. **The introduction of COMPASS provided the CO with a structured platform for managing Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs) with implementing partners, with some aspects that could benefit from more control.** The planning and reporting documents associated with PPAs were well aligned with UNHCR's results-based management framework, with each organisation systematically mapping its annual activities against UNHCR's impact and results statements, reflecting a coherent results-based management approach. In addition, internal tools and processes were in place to streamline planning and oversight. However, missing signature dates and incomplete indicator fields indicate some gaps in ensuring timely documentation and consistent data collection.
134. **The implementation of SYNERGY and WORKDAY, corporate cloud-based solutions, have not significantly helped the CO to improve the management and efficiency of partnerships and donor relations.** The level of implementation and use of SYNERGY as a cloud-based solution for managing alliances and donor relations in the CO could not be assessed in-depth, but interviews reported complexity and challenges associated with its use. This information aligns with the recent OIOS Audit on the progress of implementing UNHCR's Business Transformation Programme (2024), which raises questions about the cost-effectiveness of corporate investment in SYNERGY and the usefulness of rolling it out at the regional and country levels (United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), 2024). In addition, UNHCR's deployment of WORKDAY and corporate recruitment procedures did not contribute the swift in-country recruitment of PSP professionals in a highly competitive market (UNHCR and Private Sector Partnerships Service, 2024). The PSP recruitment process, which required multiple validations at both regional and HQ levels, added to the length of time required to fill positions. Moreover, the fundraising market has become extremely competitive and the number of experienced professionals with specialised skills is scarce, particularly in PPH, digital

¹⁰² This is in line with the findings of the Evaluation of UNHCR's Engagement with the Private Sector (2019), which mentions that both UNHCR and benchmarked organisations (other UN agencies) work more slowly than the private sector expects. UNHCR Korea's PSP analysis highlights the lack of detail and depth in reporting to major donor companies and foundations as one of the weaknesses (UNHCR Korea, Private Sector Partnership Strategy, 2021–2025).

¹⁰³ Ipsos World Refugee Day 2024: Global Attitudes Towards Refugees (IPSOS, 2024).

¹⁰⁴ Results Monitoring Survey, Data Collection Report - Republic of Korea (Chulhyo Kim *et al.*, 2023).

and face-to-face fundraising, which has limited UNHCR's capacity to recruit (and retain) positions involved in managing partnership strategy and relationships.

135. **The coordination of indicators between the Public Information (PI) and PSP teams facilitated the alignment of communication strategies aimed at mitigating the negative sentiments associated with the term "refugee" among the public (UNHCR, 2022a).** Since 2022, the teams have recognised the importance of this collaboration and the joint management of UNHCR's official social media accounts to strengthen UNHCR's brand image and increase its visibility in the public domain of the Republic of Korea. In 2023, a proactive communications plan led by PSP was identified as a key step to improve public perceptions and build greater support.
136. **The capacity to submit earmarked proposals for PPH as a starting phase, especially in countries like the Republic of Korea that deliver significant unearmarked income with its IG activities, has been perceived as very important and appropriate.** Although global and regional fundraising strategies clearly state that raising flexible funds is a priority objective, flexibility has been granted. This helps meet donors' requirements who are interested in funding specific themes or projects, in particular important for the prospection phase.
137. **Globally, efforts have been made on accountability, and more leeway has been given institutionally to regional and local teams to reallocate investment from one area, as initially planned, to another (e.g. moving from Face2Face to digital).** This ability to redistribute budgets and to do so quickly—provided it involves already identified vendors, as procurement approval is required for new vendors and may take longer—has enabled local teams to better respond to new or changing needs.
138. **UNHCR Korea has leveraged its communication and donor engagement approaches and tools to channel support from embassies and private donors to relevant local organisations.** National CSOs in the Republic of Korea have limited financial resources and few opportunities to engage with refugee communities, so the UNHCR leveraged its contacts to provide direct support to national actors. Independent initiatives, such as the Korean Refugee Film Festival and the Korean Refugee Rights Network, have served as platforms for building coalitions and partnerships.
139. **UNHCR Korea demonstrates more systematic and predictable partnership practices than the other UN agencies and organisations in Seoul with which they collaborate (e.g. WFP, International Organisation for Migration – IOM -, ICRC).** Positive examples include the provision of regular capacity-building opportunities through UNHCR's eCentre in Bangkok, efficient and near real-time information sharing, such as relaying global-level communications from the GRF through UNHCR Korea, and structured annual planning meetings between UNHCR and KCOC to identify strategic areas for collaboration.

KEQ6. How effectively has UNHCR supported the Republic of Korea's government and civil society in strengthening national asylum systems and protection frameworks for refugees and asylum - seekers? (Effectiveness)

140. UNHCR Korea has adopted a constructive role in supporting the Republic of Korea's government and civil society in strengthening the national asylum system and refugee protection frameworks. Its contributions have included technical advice on legislative reforms, participation in strategic litigation through amicus curiae submissions, and advocacy for alignment with international standards. These efforts contributed to revisions in proposed amendments to the Refugee and Immigration Acts, particularly concerning detention policies

and provisions related to “manifestly unfounded claims.” UNHCR also strengthened refugee resettlement mechanisms, and promoted institutional learning through training sessions for MoJ officials and the judiciary, as well as the co-publication of the Refugee Dictionary. Notably, UNHCR’s role in establishing the Republic of Korea’s first refugee research network has helped anchor refugee discourse within national academic frameworks, while civil society partnerships—with organisations such as the Korean Bar Association, MAP, and WeFriends—expanded legal and psychosocial support services. Pilot initiatives in health and higher education have begun to address gaps in refugee integration and vulnerability.

141. However, the effectiveness of UNHCR’s efforts to strengthen the national asylum system and the national protection framework has been limited by several constraints. For instance, official statistics reveal a low refugee recognition rate of just 2.7%. Additionally, the predominant use of humanitarian status restricted access to refugee status and other international protection mechanisms. Access to justice remains difficult due to insufficient availability of specialised lawyers, legal costs and administrative barriers in areas such as family reunification and statelessness. Although UNHCR has partially mitigated these challenges through legal assistance, training, policy advocacy and public communication, structural constraints, such as low prioritisation of refugee issues by institutions, prevalent public scepticism toward refugee reception, and the absence of a legal framework on discrimination, continue to pose barriers that limit UNHCR’s effectiveness in the areas of asylum and international protection. These factors have been consistently highlighted across UNHCR formal legal observations on national legislation, underscoring their impact on the refugee protection landscape.¹⁰⁵

Key successes, gaps, and system-level changes achieved toward ensuring access to rights, legal protection, and durable solutions for refugees

142. UNHCR’s sustained advocacy and legal engagement, including the submission of third-party legal opinions in high-impact litigation, have led to legislative reforms for the national asylum system, although their implementation has been limited due to the challenging institutional, political and social environment. The Republic of Korea’s participation in the GRF, facilitated by UNHCR, marked an important step toward aligning national protection frameworks with international standards and promoting the expansion of refugee definitions in line with global best practices. UNHCR’s technical input to legislative reviews—particularly in engagement with the MoJ and National Assembly—culminated in a formal contribution to proposed amendments to the Refugee Act and the Immigration Act in January 2025. This advocacy helped remove controversial elements such as “manifestly unfounded claims,” although the proposed Immigration Act reforms remain under consideration, and other problematic provisions persist.¹⁰⁶ In parallel, UNHCR supported relevant reforms such as the enhancement of resettlement procedures, UBR, and services facilitating refugee integration. It contributed to the constitutional review of the Republic of Korea’s detention policies, with notable success in advocating for amendments aimed at reducing the maximum immigration detention period. Additionally, UNHCR proposed the introduction of independent sampling reviews of the RSD process to improve procedural quality and foster institutional credibility.

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR (2022), Submission for the 4th Cycle UPR; OHCHR (2022), Compilation of UN Information on the Republic of Korea; UNHCR (2025), Comments on Legislative Proposal to Amend the Immigration Act.

¹⁰⁶ The amendment proposal (bill) in question was scrapped when the term of the last National Assembly ended last year. A similar bill has not yet been submitted yet. A different bill has been submitted by the Government and is currently pending. This bill suggests expanding exclusion/deportation grounds. A short explanation of the bill, written in 2024, is below: On 23 September 2024, MoJ submitted its legislative proposal to amend the Refugee Act (“Proposal”) to the National Assembly. The Proposal adds “those who have harmed national security or maintenance of law and order, or who poses a risk thereto” as a ground to exclude asylum-seekers from refugee status, and to withdraw refugee status if already given. The Proposal purports to be an implementation of the 1951 Convention without providing further explanation. The first draft of the Proposal was first announced at the end of last year and was presented as part of the MoJ’s efforts to ensure that its immigration policy reform serves national interest. The final Proposal remains substantially the same as the first draft, except for removing “public welfare” from the proposed exclusion grounds. Correspondence with internal KI.

143. **UNHCR, in collaboration with CSOs, has strategically utilised legal channels to advance progressive reforms in access to protection. However, these legal advancements have, at times, diverged from the positions taken by public institutions, contributing to differing interpretations of asylum-related matters. Despite differing views, UNHCR has sustained constructive working relationships with relevant government actors, but it has faced structural constraints that have limited broader progress in the development of the national asylum policy and system.** The 2023 decisions of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea regarding immigration detention and birth registration illustrate the potential of strategic litigation—pursued jointly by UNHCR and specialised national actors—to contribute meaningfully to an enabling protection environment (Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea, 2023). These efforts informed subsequent policy developments, including the amendment of the Immigration Act in March 2025 and the planned implementation of a revised immigration detention system as of June 2025.¹⁰⁷ While these represent notable steps forward, several key protection challenges remain unresolved.¹⁰⁸ In this evolving legislative context, UNHCR has continued to provide neutral, expert technical input to the Legislative and Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly to inform deliberations on the government’s proposed amendments to the Immigration Act.¹⁰⁹ The legal work of UNHCR and CSOs also been instrumental in achieving favourable court decisions for refugees at airports, as well as in courts referring to UNHCR guidelines on international protection.¹¹⁰ In case 2021GaDan5118704 at Seoul Central District Court, the amicus curiae submission by UNHCR Korea offered a definitive interpretation of Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, marking a significant milestone on this issue.¹¹¹ However, other initiatives—such as efforts to improve the overall quality of the national asylum system or to reform the Refugee Act—have not advanced, reflecting the persistence of institutional barriers to more comprehensive reform.¹¹²
144. **A key challenge in the refugee recognition process has been the frequent use of humanitarian status¹¹³ in place of full refugee status, resulting in more limited protection outcomes. This trend has persisted despite UNHCR’s sustained efforts to provide technical advice to the MoJ, courts, and civil society on international refugee law and protection standards.** Although both refugee and humanitarian status provide protection against deportation, individuals granted humanitarian status have fewer rights and benefits than recognised refugees. They are also given short-term visas and are excluded from pathways to permanent residency or naturalisation.¹¹⁴ While

¹⁰⁷ References to recent events outside the evaluation period are included because they are the result of work carried out by UNHCR in previous years.

¹⁰⁸ Network for the Action against Immigration Detention (NAID), Duroo - Association for Public Interest Law (2025) NGO Thematic Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Immigration Detention in the Republic of Korea. 115th Session | 29 April – 30 April 2025).

¹⁰⁹ UNHCR Comments on the Government’s Legislative Proposal to Amend the Immigration Act regarding Immigration Detention in the Republic of Korea (7 October 2024, No. 4587).

¹¹⁰ UNHCR Korea – Protection overview 2024.

¹¹¹ UNHCR Korea provided an authoritative interpretation of Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, emphasising that penalties for irregular entry or presence—whether criminal or administrative—are prohibited when refugees meet specific criteria, including arriving directly from a place of threat, presenting themselves without delay, and showing good cause. The submission advocated a broad and purposive interpretation of “penalty,” “without delay,” and “good cause,” grounded in international jurisprudence and national legislation. UNHCR further clarified that Article 31 protections apply to both recognised refugees and asylum - seekers, and that detention should only be used as a last resort. Interviewees considered that this intervention, used to guide judicial interpretation in the Republic of Korea and to strengthen national alignment with international refugee protection standards, Interviewees considered that this intervention, used to guide judicial interpretation in the Republic of Korea and to strengthen national alignment with international refugee protection standards, was relevant and effective in improving the protection environment.

¹¹² Interviewees consistently noted that UNHCR in Korea had correctly identified key areas on which to focus its efforts. However, despite UNHCR’s efforts to facilitate meaningful progress in these areas, systemic constraints affected UNHCR’s ability to promote further development of the national asylum system and protection framework. UNHCR’s annual reports also document the challenges the organisation faced in promoting far-reaching reforms to the national asylum system (UNHCR Annual Results Report 2023, Republic of Korea, Internal).

¹¹³ The humanitarian status is a legal designation distinct from full refugee status under the Refugee Act.

¹¹⁴ In addition to the UPR: 4th cycle, 42nd session, numerous documents produced by both UNHCR (including strategies, annual planning and reporting documents, Results Monitoring Survey, Protection Overview) and external sources (specialised civil society organisations, researchers, universities and national media detail progress in asylum and protection, while also highlighting gaps in the implementation of international protection principles and rights violations. They also draw attention to the risks of stagnation or regression in the implementation of protection standards and good practices. See, for example: UNHCR Republic of Korea, MYS 2023-2025, Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations; UNHCR Results Monitoring Survey 2022, UNHCR Korea Protection overview 2024; NANCEN Refugee Rights Center, How is South Korea’s refugee law going? What’s Wrong with South Korea’s Refugee Law and the Way Forward (NANCEN,2024a)

the work of the UNHCR in providing Country of Origin Information, along with the support of civil society, has been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes in some court cases, it has not resulted in a more accurate interpretation of the refugee status and the humanitarian status in line with international standards.¹¹⁵ The situation of Yemenis fleeing the war illustrates the restrictive application of refugee status, as Yemeni nationals have typically been granted humanitarian residence permits rather than formal refugee recognition. With these permits, Yemeni nationals work in precarious jobs, enjoy certain freedoms regarding employment and international travel, and contribute economically. However, they face instability due to annual visa renewals, restrictions on family reunification and limited entrepreneurial rights. Compared to refugees and other migrant visa holders, Yemenis experience less protection and stability (Otsubo and Reiko, 2025).

145. **UNHCR Korea has made sustained efforts to strengthen the capacities of government institutions, civil society actors and research centres in the Republic of Korea. These initiatives have been important in a context where the national asylum system remains under strain due to an overburdened RSD procedure, limited institutional resources, and insufficient knowledge of international refugee law (UNHCR, 2023).** To address these challenges, UNHCR Korea has invested significantly in capacity-building activities targeting key institutional stakeholders. Over the past two years, 119 RSD officers received training on refugee law and case processing, with additional ad hoc support provided to the MoJ's Refugee Policy Division (RPD). Recognising the critical role of the judiciary in refugee recognition, UNHCR has also advocated for expanding judicial training. In parallel, UNHCR has strengthened civil society engagement through technical and financial support to organisations such as MAP, Homolnter, Dongcheon Foundation, and the Korean Bar Association (KBA). These partnerships have enhanced the availability of legal assistance and interpretation services—addressing two major barriers faced by asylum - seekers and refugees in accessing RSD procedures, protection services, and integration opportunities. Collectively, the supported organisations account for more than 130 lawyers and over 60 interpreters trained.¹¹⁶ As part of its institutional knowledge-building efforts, UNHCR Korea co-published the *Refugee Dictionary* with the MoJ to promote greater conceptual clarity on refugee-related issues. It also played a key role in establishing the first national refugee research network in partnership with the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy in 2024. This platform has helped catalyse academic interest and foster sustained scholarly engagement with refugee and asylum issues in the Korean context.
146. **In the pursuit of durable solutions, UNHCR has supported initiatives that directly impact refugees' lives, channelling resources into healthcare programmes and education, helping bridge critical gaps in access to essential services. Although the scope of UNHCR's interventions may appear modest due to resource constraints, its support has enabled the identification of situations of heightened vulnerability, the strengthening of local response capacities, and the launch of pilot initiatives that can serve as models for other local organisations.** In health, UNHCR has addressed two critical service gaps through strategic partnerships with specialised actors, raising awareness of underserved needs, and strengthening the capacities of national institutions. First, UNHCR has supported the provision of psychosocial and mental health services for asylum - seekers and refugees. Its collaboration with the Korean Refugee Rights Network and the Korean Neuropsychiatric Association was instrumental in establishing a mental health working group and in sensitising mental health professionals to trauma-related needs specific to displaced populations. Refugees and asylum - seekers often experience high levels of stress and vulnerability, both from the circumstances of their forced displacement and the protracted and complex nature of the asylum process and socio-economic integration in the Republic of Korea—

¹¹⁵ Since 1994, when the Republic of Korea's RSD system began, the country has received over 122,000 asylum applications. However, only 1,544 individuals have been recognised as refugees in total – roughly 2.7% of all adjudicated cases (Yonhap News Agency, 2025). A few thousand (approximately 2,400–2,600, or about 4–5%) have been granted “humanitarian stay” permits.

¹¹⁶ UNHCR Annual Results Report 2023 and 2022, Republic of Korea, Internal; UNHCR Korea – Protection overview 2024.

needs that are well-documented in both UNHCR assessments and academic literature.¹¹⁷ Second, UNHCR has provided financial support to cover essential medical expenses that are unaffordable for refugees, asylum - seekers, and persons with humanitarian status—populations who are often unable to pay health insurance premiums. To address these structural gaps, UNHCR has partnered with NGOs and facilitated cooperation with healthcare providers. For example, it has worked with organisations such as WeFriends and the KBA to deliver integrated medical and legal assistance to individuals facing exclusion.

147. While access to education up to the secondary level is guaranteed, significant gaps remain in access to higher education and employment-linked training for refugee youth and adults. In 2023, UNHCR launched a pilot initiative on complementary pathways in collaboration with the MoJ, Sogang University, and Gipum Nanum International. This initiative provides university scholarships to support refugee students, including two individuals who arrived in 2022 and are scheduled to begin higher education in 2025. Information on the scope and effectiveness of UNHCR’s livelihood interventions remains limited. However, employment is consistently reported as one of the most pressing needs among asylum - seekers and refugees.¹¹⁸

148. **Despite the progress described above, forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the Republic of Korea continue to face significant barriers in accessing adequate protection, exercising their rights, and integrating into host communities.** The key role played by UNHCR, the progress achieved but also the persistent gaps and challenges in international protection are widely recognised in interviews and reports from multiple sources. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has noted persistent difficulties in implementing UNHCR’s recommendations on asylum and international protection.¹¹⁹ Specific challenges include procedural shortcomings at ports of entry, where asylum - seekers may face de facto detention and denial of access to the asylum procedure. Within the RSD system, concerns remain regarding the quality of decision-making and its alignment with the standards of the 1951 Refugee Convention. While UNHCR provides legal assistance, multiple sources report that access to legal representation remains limited.¹²⁰ The lack of legal counsel is associated with lower refugee recognition rates¹²¹, underscoring the importance of UNHCR’s efforts to expand legal aid capacity. In addition, structural and legal barriers to family reunification persist, alongside the lack of alternatives to detention and the absence of a national framework for identifying and protecting stateless persons.¹²² Socioeconomic vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by limited access to

¹¹⁷ UNHCR Results Monitoring Survey. Data Collection Report. Republic of Korea, 2022 : “It is notable that among recognised refugees particularly higher rate reported “mental health” (10.9%) than other subgroups.” See also the following publications: Yoon, M.S., Feyissa, I.F. & Jung, E.H. The Long Way to Refugee Status Acquisition and Mental Health in Post-Migration: Based on Asylum - Seekers and Refugees in South Korea. *Psychiatr Q* 91, 403–416 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11126-020-09714-9>
Ra, C.K., Huh, J., Finch, B.K. et al. The impact of perceived discrimination on depressive symptoms and the role of differentiated social support among immigrant populations in South Korea. *Int J Equity Health* 18, 7 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-0910-9>

Lee, S.Y., Kim, W.H. & Heo, J. Migrant well-being and undocumented status in South Korea: a cross-sectional assessment of physical, psychological, social well-being, and health behaviours. *Int J Equity Health* 23, 38 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-024-02126-2>

¹¹⁸ UNHCR Results Monitoring Survey. Data Collection Report. Republic of Korea, 2022 : “... respondents show significantly low rate of employment. Many of them feel their income have decreased. They have less access to mobile banking than average Koreans.”

¹¹⁹ Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report. UPR: 4th Cycle, 42nd Session. Republic of Korea.

¹²⁰ This includes the monitoring indicator self-reported by UNHCR in 2022 and 2023, which was rated as ‘moderately meets’ with respect to the extent to which refugee status determination procedures adhere to the procedural standards advocated by UNHCR.

¹²¹ As of December 2024, South Korea’s refugee recognition rate stands at approximately 2.7%, significantly lower than the OECD average of 25%. Nonetheless, South Korea actively recognises those in need of protection from countries like Myanmar (56.4%), Burundi (50%), Ethiopia (28.9%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (28.6%), and Iran (26.9%). Additionally, 2,696 individuals who were not recognised as refugees but required protection due to inhumane treatment or torture have been granted humanitarian stay permits. When combining the recognition and humanitarian stay permits, the total protection rate stands at 7.4% (UNHCR Protection overview 2024; UNHCR Republic of Korea, MYS 2023-2025; Analysis of South Korea’s Refugee System and Refugee Status, based on the MoJ statistics, Yoon & Yang Law Firm, 2024).

¹²² For example, see the following UNHCR documents: UNHCR Annual Results Report 2022 & 2023, Republic of Korea, Internal; UNHCR Republic of Korea, Strategy report multi-year 2023-2025, Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations; UNHCR Results Monitoring Survey. Data Collection Report. Republic of Korea, 2022. In addition, see the analysis published by other external sources: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report. UPR: 4th Cycle, 42nd Session;

livelihoods and healthcare during the first six months of the asylum process, when individuals are ineligible for employment permits or public assistance. Finally, the lack of anti-discrimination legislation¹²³ and the reluctance of public opinion to accept refugees¹²⁴ make local integration initiatives more difficult.

KEQ7. How effectively has UNHCR positioned itself strategically in the Republic of Korea to secure funding, particularly with government entities, civil society sectors, and private sector partners for UNHCR globally? (Effectiveness)

149. UNHCR Korea is viewed as a credible partner by government actors, leveraging its mandate and professionalism to align effectively with the Republic of Korea's international development and humanitarian agenda. This credibility has enabled UNHCR to support Korea's ambition of becoming a top ten global donor. The significant increase in public funding - from \$24 million in 2023 to \$66.7 million in 2024, including unearmarked and earmarked funds -, reflects the growing confidence of the Republic of Korea's government in UNHCR and its ability to provide principled humanitarian assistance worldwide. UNHCR's rapid crisis response, notably in Ukraine, reinforced its profile as a competent and valued relief provider, enhancing its strategic leverage for securing funding. UNHCR's unique mandate in international protection and leadership in the Global Protection Cluster further reinforce its strategic relevance to the Republic of Korea's global ODA objectives.
150. Engagement with CSOs and public administrations has expanded through UNHCR's training initiatives in legal aid and programmatic support, contributing to improved national capacities and reinforcing UNHCR's role as a normative leader in refugee protection. The organisation has cultivated a modest but impactful network involving academia, NGOs, and researchers, and targeted public events have helped UNHCR shape the national discourse. UNHCR's civil society engagement has been modest, particularly in grassroots mobilisation and localised training. Furthermore, limited investment in media engagement and the underutilisation of influential stakeholders (e.g. public figures) have constrained public advocacy efforts, weakening potential support for refugee causes within the Republic of Korea's broader civil society.
151. Regarding the private sector, UNHCR Korea has achieved notable success in mobilising flexible funding, with unearmarked donations constituting over 80% of PSP income between 2021–2024. However, there has been a downward trend in private sector revenue, from US\$ 49 million in 2022 to US\$ 42 million in 2024, driven by declines in both One-Off and committed

Republic of Korea; NHRCK.

Politics of Refugee Reception in South Korea: Liberal Norms and Restrictive Institutions. UC San Diego (Choi,2021.); Reiko Otsubo, "Yemenis in South Korea: Risky Freedom under the Refugee Act and the Employment Permit System ", Arabian Humanities [Online], 20 | 2025.

¹²³ Several attempts have been made since the early 2000s to pass an Anti-Discrimination Act (commonly referred to as the Equality Act), but these efforts have consistently stalled in the National Assembly due to political opposition and social resistance. The Republic of Korea has been repeatedly urged by UN bodies, including the UN Human Rights Committee and UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation (see, for example, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Combined twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports submitted by the Republic of Korea under article 9 of the Convention, June 2022). These UN bodies have noted that the lack of such a framework undermines effective protection for minorities. Although the NHRCK has authority to investigate discrimination cases and recommend remedies, its decisions are not legally binding, and its scope is limited without a comprehensive legal framework.

¹²⁴ In addition to interviews with UNHCR staff and external informants, several documents highlight the limited social support for refugees. See, for example:

Ipsos Country Report South Korea (April 2023) - UNHCR Brand Measurement, Joint survey UNHCR and Korea Research (2020): 53% of South Korean adults were opposed to receiving refugees, while 33% were in favour and UNHCR Annual reports 2022, 2023.

giving. Critically, the PPH segment remains underdeveloped, comprising merely 3.3% of revenue in 2024—well below regional and global benchmarks (16% and 37% respectively). The limited donor base, particularly among high-net-worth individuals, reflects underexploited opportunities in a wealthy national context. Furthermore, the reduced acquisition investment amidst rising competition and low digital fundraising capacity have hampered donor base growth and sustainability. While RoI was preserved through cost reduction, this approach has come at the expense of long-term growth, indicating scope for improvement in UNHCR Korea's overall private sector engagement strategy.

UNHCR's positioning (added value and comparative advantages)

152. **From a corporate perspective, UNHCR has successfully positioned itself as a relevant partner for the Republic of Korea to deepen engagement with the implementation of the national plans for international cooperation and humanitarian assistance, thanks to its unique mandate, normative authority, technical expertise, and field presence in major humanitarian crises.** The aspects that differentiate UNHCR from other international agencies and organisations (e.g. mandate in international protection and statelessness, supervisory role over Member States under the 1951 Refugee Convention¹²⁵, support for RSD, and its position as leader of the Protection Cluster under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee) are perceived by external stakeholders as complementary to, and instrumental in, the deployment of the Republic of Korea government's international cooperation policies and plans. UNHCR's expertise¹²⁶ and global field presence¹²⁷ in providing protection, assistance, and solutions in crisis and development contexts enables Korean institutions to strengthen their tools and capacities, positioning them more strongly in the arena of international cooperation and humanitarian action at the global level. This aligns with the Republic of Korea's 2025 Comprehensive Implementation Plan for International Development Cooperation, in which the realisation of humanitarian values is one of four key implementation pillars. UNHCR and the Government of the Republic of Korea have established a mutually beneficial partnership that goes beyond public funding and ad hoc projects.
153. **Domestically, UNHCR's expertise and technical advice to the government of the Republic of Korea in asylum and forced displacement, including resettlement, contributes to the alignment of national policies with international standards.** UNHCR has provided expertise and technical advice to government institutions and CSOs on refugee law and international protection standards, playing a key role in the implementation of the Refugee Act (2013).¹²⁸ UNHCR has also supported the establishment of statelessness determination procedures and has advised on improvement of resettlement criteria. UNHCR's advocacy has focused on enhancing refugee protection and inclusion, including the prevention of statelessness, reduction of immigration detention, and the promotion of refugees' right to work. In relation to resettlement, UNHCR's collaboration with national authorities has contributed to the strengthening of the Republic of Korea's resettlement programme, including support for integration, cultural orientation, and the development of new pathways for refugee education and labour mobility. In addition to the progress reflected in UNHCR annual reports, interviewees considered this support to be particularly valuable given that the Republic of Korea has only recently

¹²⁵ UNHCR Statute, paragraph 8: "The High Commissioner shall provide for the protection of refugees falling under the competence of his Office by: (a) promoting the conclusion and ratification of international conventions for the protection of refugees, supervising their application [...].". See also: (Blackham, 2013; Türk and UNHCR, 2022).

¹²⁶ e.g. interpretation and promotion of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol and related legal instruments and frameworks, technical assistance to States in developing asylum laws and systems, conducting or supporting Refugee Status Determination, ensuring compliance with non-refoulement and due process, protection monitoring and legal aid, influence normative frameworks that protect refugees globally).

¹²⁷ As of 2025, UNHCR operates in 136 countries across seven regions to protect and assist refugees, asylum - seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and stateless individuals. UNHCR is actively responding to multiple major humanitarian crises worldwide (e.g. Sudan, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Syria, Gaza, among others), driven by ongoing conflicts, climate-related disasters, and complex displacement dynamics.

¹²⁸ The Republic of Korea's Refugee Act was passed by the National Assembly on 29 December 2011 and came into effect on 1 July 2013 (UNHCR annual reports, NHRCK)

started to host refugees on a small scale. UNHCR Korea's work (together with MoJ, IOM and others) helped to ensure that refugees selected for resettlement, mainly from Myanmar, and to a lesser extent from Afghanistan and Iran, receive cultural orientation prior to their arrival in the Republic of Korea.

154. **UNHCR Korea has played an effective catalytic and convener role in broadening the mobilisation of stakeholders on refugee issues beyond the institutional sphere.** UNHCR's catalytic role, thanks to its UNHCR's normative authority has contributed to initiating and accelerating progress in refugee legislation, asylum procedures, and the establishment of a statelessness framework, in close collaboration with a range of national stakeholders. UNHCR's convener role has stimulated a broader understanding of refugee issues and elevated the overall advocacy environment. The creation of a network of researchers in the Republic of Korea,¹²⁹ the development of specialised research centres and the increased availability of academic courses have been essential in generating support for initiatives focused on refugees. Notably, civil society actors have echoed the UNHCR's calls for improved asylum systems, and their growing capacities — partly developed through UNHCR training — have contributed to a more fertile environment for long-term fundraising and partnerships. While the financial contributions of civil society to the response to refugee needs remain modest, the expansion of national ownership of refugee protection is a strategic asset in itself, enhancing the legitimacy of the UNHCR across sectors.
155. **UNHCR's global leadership role in the IASC Global Protection Cluster (GPC), along with its experience in integrating climate action within the 'Triple Nexus' approach, provides the organisation with a distinct comparative advantage over other humanitarian actors in the Republic of Korea, complementing its added value at the national level** (as outlined in previous paragraphs). By coordinating the GPC, UNHCR provides national partners with access to a robust international protection network. This network enables rapid and effective responses to refugee and displacement crises worldwide, establishing UNHCR as a unique entity within the realm of humanitarian organisations. UNHCR's approach to climate-induced displacement, engagement in climate action, and the linkages between humanitarian action, peace and development are also considered valuable assets for the Republic of Korea's foreign policy and humanitarian agenda. These attributes enhance UNHCR Korea's ability to align its protection mandate, especially with regard to displacement driven by conflict and climate change, with KOICA's development cooperation and humanitarian priorities. While other international organisations operate in the Republic of Korea, none have a specialised focus on international protection and forced displacement, nor an equivalent opportunity to strengthen collaboration with KOICA in these critical areas (UNHCR, 2021; OECD, 2024).
156. **UNHCR's strategic positioning and institutional added value have proven effective in securing a substantial increase in public funding from the Republic of Korea.** Public contributions from the Republic of Korea to UNHCR rose markedly from US\$ 24 million in 2023 to US\$ 66.7 million in 2024. The country also retained its membership in the "USD 20 million club", contributing US\$ 24.1 million in 2023, and significantly increased its core (unearmarked) contributions fourfold, from US\$ 3.8 million to US\$ 18 million in 2024. In 2023, UNHCR submitted seven proposals for public funding, with four successfully approved (US\$ 1 million from MoFA for Afghanistan, and KOICA support for Niger, Myanmar, and Mauritania, covering multi-year programming from 2024 to 2026 (UNHCR, 2023)).¹³⁰ Beyond the increase in volume, the quality of contributions has also improved. The Republic of Korea's unearmarked contributions to UNHCR have risen significantly from 2022 to 2024 (specific figures and sources withheld per UNHCR guidance), indicating a shift toward more predictable and flexible

¹²⁹ Several universities in the Republic of Korea created the "human rights research network" in 2023.

¹³⁰ In January 2024, KOICA launched a Humanitarian Assistance Division to facilitate solutions to refugee and internal displacement situations through the Humanitarian-Development and Peacebuilding (HDP) nexus approach, providing UNHCR approximately US\$ 7-10 million annually. To formalise the cooperation, a MoU was signed on the occasion of the AHC Operation's mission in April 2024. In connection to the MoU, UNHCR expects to sign a USD 13.6 million Grant agreement for MENA region in September 2024. Two multi-year proposals (Peru and Ethiopia) submitted to KOICA's multi-bi call for proposal are under review by the budget authority for 2025 funding. UNHCR Ecuador submitted a proposal for the second phase of the KOICA project for 2026-2028 of USD 8m. To further complement KOICA's Korean INGO capacity-building efforts, in partnership with the RBAP's eCentre and KCOC, UNHCR has been offering training opportunities since 2014.

funding. This evolution aligns with the principles of good humanitarian donorship and reflects growing confidence in UNHCR's institutional role and delivery capacity. Finally, in a further signal of deepened institutional engagement, UNHCR and KOICA signed a MoU in April 2024, under which KOICA committed to providing approximately US\$ 7–10 million annually in support of longer-term, regionally integrated programmes. This marks a notable shift away from short-term, country-specific projects toward 10-year programmatic frameworks—a modality that reinforces UNHCR's strategic positioning as a trusted partner for sustained collaboration with KOICA.

Rol made in PSP and investment made in building national interest in refugee issues in terms of IG and “global solidarity”

157. The strong positioning of UNHCR with the Republic of Korea's government bodies is also an asset for developing fundraising among private donors. Recognition of the organisation's expertise by authorities and specialists, plus public grants, can indeed serve as reassurance for the private sector. In recent years, UNHCR has also succeeded in earning the trust of numerous private individual donors.¹³¹

Donor Base

158. **UNHCR data shows a negative trend in the evolution of the active donor base, with the number of donors declining over the past two years.** The decline in One-Off donors (OO) in 2023 and 2024 can be justified by the sharp increase in 2022 (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below) linked to an exceptional and momentary donor mobilisation for the humanitarian emergencies in other regions. This is not the case for regular donors. A decrease in the number of active IG donors directly affects both present and future performance, particularly on regular income generation and/ or on PPH results, because the bigger the base, the more opportunities there are to upgrade donors into Mid-value or Major Donors and to promote Gifts in Will.

Table 3. UNHCR Korea number of donors evolution 2021-2024

<i>Evolution # donors</i>	2022 vs 2021	2023 vs 2022	2024 vs 2023
Total donors	7.3%	-6.6%	-6.7%
Reg or Committed Givers	2%	-5.3%	-5%
One-Off	45%	-12.6%	-16%

Source: Data extracted from APAC Plan versus Q Report

PSP income evolution and Rol

159. **In terms of private funding, UNHCR figures show a decline in revenue in 2023 and 2024 following a year of growth in 2022; between 2022 and 2024, private sector funding falls from \$49 million to \$42 million.** Compared to 2021, PSP revenue declined following an exceptional year of growth in 2022 (14% increase); this was driven by highly covered international humanitarian emergencies (e.g. Ukraine). Both income and net income decreased by 3% in 2023 and by 9% in 2024 (see Table 4 below). The lack of precise data on the performance of comparable organisations¹³² makes it impossible to assess the effectiveness of UNHCR Korea in the Korean market. However, the heavy reliance of PSP on income generated through IG, an income stream facing a downward trend, has not been offset by an increase in PPH. On the contrary, this is where UNHCR Korea recorded its sharpest decline, with a -35% drop compared to 2023 (see Table 4 below). Therefore, UNHCR Korea's efficiency in maintaining and growing its income is likely to be lower than that of other organisations having a bigger PPH share of income.

¹³¹ UNHCR's donor base in the Republic of Korea accounted for 241,198 individual donors by the end of 2024.

¹³² Despite multiple requests, the evaluation team was not able to access the principle IFL report.

Table 4. UNHCR Korea PSP Income evolution 2021-2024 (LC)

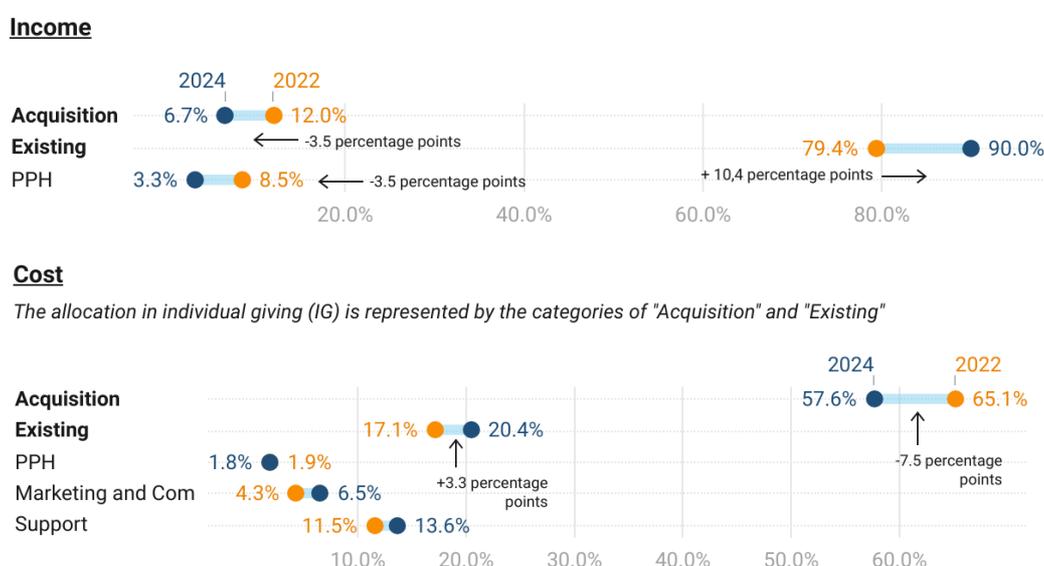
Evolution	2022 vs 2021	2023 vs 2022	2024 vs 2023
Total net income	14%	-3%	-9%
Acquisition	60%	-12%	-44%
Existing	2%	4%	-3%
PPH	262%	-47%	-35%

Source: Data extracted from APAC Plan versus Q Report and from UNHCR PSP annual Financial Reports

160. **UNHCR Korea successfully brought flexible funding to the organisation (one of the global priorities), generating 80% of its total income completely unrestricted between 2021 and 2024, despite the overall decrease in private funding.** The percentage of unearmarked funds ranged from 76% in 2022 to 86% in 2021. There is a slight downward trend over the period, with unearmarked funds reaching 81% in 2024 (-5% compared to 2021). Softly earmarked funds represented 17% of the period, with a slight increase of 5% compared to 2021.

161. **UNHCR allocated a major share of its PSP investment to the development of IG activities.** At least 80% of its total costs went to IG, notably in the acquisition of new donors, with a share going from 65.1% in 2022 to 57.6% in 2024 (see Figure 8 below)**Error! Reference source not found.** IG income represented 97% of PSP income raised in 2024.

Figure 8: UNHCR Korea PSP Income and Costs breakdown 2022-2024 (Local Currency-LC)



Source: Data extracted from UNHCR PSP annual Financial Reports

162. **The analysis of the UNHCR Korea PSP Strategy and the UNHCR PSP Annual Financial reports shows that the evolution of the level of investment was not aligned with strategic growth objectives in IG.** The limited growth in overall investment in 2022 and 2023—and its decline in 2024 (-8% in 2024 compared to 2023), particularly with regard to acquisition in IG (-18% in 2024 compared to 2023)—was not aligned with the context of an increasingly competitive and constrained market where sustained efforts in acquisition and retention were essential to drive growth (see Table 5 below). It did not support UNHCR Korea PSP for the significant growth needed to reach 400,000 regular donors in 2025 (as outlined in its strategy), since UNHCR Korea at the end of each year was still far from that goal (230,657 regular donors were reported for 2022; 218,327 were reported for 2023; and 207,391 were reported for 2024).

Table 5. UNHCR Korea PSP Costs evolution 2021-2024 (LC)

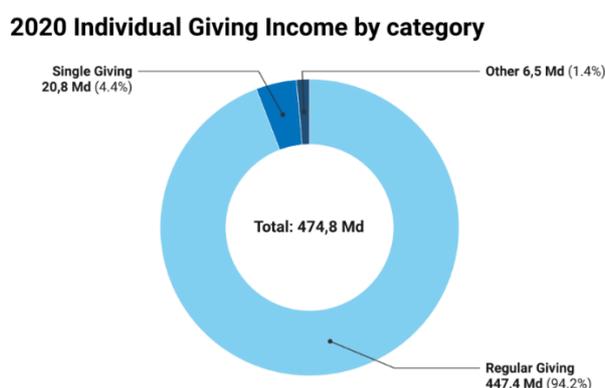
Evolution	2022 vs 2021	2023 vs 2022	2024 vs 2023
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Total PSP costs	0%	4%	-8%
Acquisition	-5%	3%	-18%
Existing	3%	14%	0%
Marketing and Com	17%	22%	18%
PPH	3%	-37%	46%
Support	21%	-4%	17%

Source: Data extracted from UNHCR Korea PSP annual Financial Reports

163. **Investment in acquisitions decreased between 2021 and 2024, while acquisitions became increasingly challenging due to increased competition.** Numerous local and international organisations in the Republic of Korea have been investing in Regular Giving for years. International Fundraising Leadership Forum (IFL) consolidated data (see Figure 9 below) from 17 INGOs in 2020¹³³ clearly demonstrate the paramount share of regular income collected in the Republic of Korea.¹³⁴ The public's response to Regular Giving solicitations, which has historically been strong in the Republic of Korea, is immensely valuable for organisations. Regular donor Lifetime Value (LTV) typically exceeds that of one-time donors and makes income projections for the mid-term more predictable.

Figure 9. IFL 2020 Income Breakdown Between One-off (single giving) and Regular donors).



Source: IFL 2020 report (amounts in local currency)

164. **A significant portion of UNHCR Korea's PSP investment remained focused on regular donors. In 2022, F2F and Direct Response TV (DRTV) accounted for 82.5% of total acquisition costs, while in 2024, this figure accounted for 74.7%.** However, the consolidated level of investment of the two key channels to acquire regular donors decreased by 3% in 2022, was flat in 2023, and had a 24% drop in 2024 (see Table 6 below). Investment in in-house F2F teams has not increased, while investment in F2F through agencies was halted in 2023.¹³⁵

¹³³ UNHCR has yet to provide data relating to the most recent IFL annual results to the evaluation team.

¹³⁴ Document review (confidential source not publicly available).

¹³⁵ Nb. The evaluation team was unable to verify how much this was due to the limited operational capacity of these agencies: during field level data collection, no meeting was organised by UNHCR Korea with its F2F service provider and PSP staff in charge of F2F.

Table 6. UNHCR Korea PSP Acquisition Costs Breakdown by Channel 2022-2024 (LC)

Concept	F2F(in-house)	F2F(agency)	DRTV	Total F2F + DRTV	Digital donor	Total
2022	55.35%	6.35%	20.77%	82.47%	17.11%	99.58% *
2023	64.95%	0.00%	15.19%	80.14%	19.86%	100.0%
2024	55.42%	0.00%	19.31%	74.7...	25.27%	100.0%

*Multi-channel represented 0.4% in 2022

"Acquisition mail" and "Print Advertising and Inserts" had no acquisition costs in any year.

Source: Asia – Pacific (APAC) Plan versus Q Report

165. **Strategically, the overall decrease in F2F investment was not redirected to DRTV, as the costs of both channels were reduced in 2023 and 2024 compared to 2022.** The amounts previously allocated for the acquisition of regular donors were not fully redirected toward the acquisition of one-off donors. In 2023 and 2024, the cost reduction in F2F and DRTV combined was 4.5 times greater than the increase in digital costs. Therefore, the investment in the digital channel—usually more focused on One-Off donors—could not be sufficient, even with a plan to convert One-Off donors into regular donors, neither to maintain the number of regular donors nor to grow the one-off donor base significantly.

166. **The analysis of the share of expenditure by channel out of total PSP acquisition expenditure shows that the share of digital investment has risen from 17% in 2022 to 25% in 2024 (see Table 6 above).** The evolution of budget allocation towards more digital IG acquisition is relevant to growing the One-Off gifts, as well as to increasing online visibility and awareness, and therefore potentially leveraging new partnerships.

Table 7. Evolution of UNHCR Korea PSP Acquisition Costs by Year 2022-2024 (LC)

Evolution in %	2022	2023	2024
Total acquisition			
Face To Face (agency)	0%	9%	-30%
Face To Face (in-house)			
Digital donor Acquisition	-15%	20%	4%
DRTV	-9%	-25%	4%

Source: APAC Plan versus Q Report

167. **RoI was maintained at a steady level following a 0.57-point increase in 2022, declining by 0.3 points in 2023.** Due to lower costs in 2024,¹³⁶ it was maintained at this level this past year. The reduction in costs has helped maintain the RoI in the short term but has negatively impacted UNHCR Korea's ability to acquire new donors (see: KEQ2), which will be detrimental in the long-term income generation (see Table 8 below).

¹³⁶ The reduction of costs was mainly in F2F. There were both staff gaps in their internal team, and some drops in the number of headcounts in the external F2F agencies. 2022 was exceptional, as emergencies (in this case mostly Ukraine), and emergencies highly covered by media, are triggering one-off gifts but those donors emotionally driven, who give for emergencies are very difficult to retain.

Table 8. UNHCR Korea PSP Return on Investment (RoI) and Cost on Dollar Raised (CPDR) evolution 2021-2024 (LC)

<i>Evolution</i>	2022 vs 2021	2023 vs 2022	2024 vs 2023
Total net income	14%	-3%	-9%
RoI	0,57	-0,30	0,00
CPDR	-0,12	0,01	0,07

Source: Calculation based on data extracted from APAC Plan versus Q Report and from UNHCR PSP annual Financial Reports

Private Partnerships and Philanthropy

168. **PPH is currently largely underrepresented in UNHCR Korea's revenue. According to UNHCR internal data, by the end of 2024, the share of PPH in UNHCR Korea's private revenue was at 3.3%, showing a decline since 2022.**¹³⁷ Such a share is problematic in terms of revenue diversification and contribution to PSP RoI, as, unlike the massive investments required in IG, PPH costs are lower, since they are essentially related to the cost of dedicated staff. Given these lower costs and the high value of PPH giving levels, it is usually high RoI that is the best in the industry, driving the overall PSP RoI upward. In comparison, the weight of PPH income for the UNHCR APAC region and UNHCR Global at the end of 2024 was 16% and 37%, respectively.

169. **The analysis of the PPH donor portfolio shows that their number is small in a wealthy country like the Republic of Korea, with fewer than 100 donors per year in total over the past three years: only 60% reached the major giving threshold (Korean Won (KRW) 10 million per year, i.e., around US\$ 10,000) in 2023.** The responsiveness of PPH donors to emergencies has been proven, with a 95% increase in the number of donors in 2022. The retention and even acquisition of new donors was commendable the following year for corporate donors and foundations. However, the retention of Major Donor Individuals after the 2022 peak was weak, with the number of donors falling back to 2021 levels (plus one donor)¹³⁸ (see Table 9 below). For reference, the CAGR growth from 2020 to 2024 for Major Donors at UNHCR global level was 10%. What has been achieved with foundations and corporate donors is UNHCR Korea noteworthy: although still on a small scale, it is positive and for corporate could generate GIK. Nonetheless, strategically, PPH resources have not been fully optimised, as the individual donor segment in the broader philanthropy context is known for offering valuable advantages over the corporate sector: less volatility in case of economic recession, stability of persons of contact, less demanding earmarking and reporting requirements, and more compliant with the due diligence process.

Table 9. UNHCR Korea number of PPH donor evolution 2021-2024

<i>Evolution # donors</i>	2022 vs 2021	2023 vs 2022	2024 vs 2023
Total donors PPH			
Major Donors High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs)	60%	-33%	-44%
Corporate	113%	29%	NA
Foundations	113%	34%	NA
Gift in Kind	NA	NA	NA

Source: PSP Q4 narrative reports

¹³⁷ The 2024 PPH income is underestimated according to the KOR Q4 2024 Narrative Report: "delayed receipt & income recording of the 2024 GIKs from JTS into the financial system, which will be carried over to 2025." If this was reflected as planned, the PPH total revenue would have reached KRW 3.4 billion, almost twice the result."

¹³⁸ For reference, the CAGR growth from 2020 to 2024 for Major Donors at UNHCR global level was 9% (UNHCR. (2024) 2024 Year-End Deep Dive Report)

170. **The projected PPH revenue growth for 2025-2027 for UNHCR Korea is the lowest among its regional peers.** As illustrated by UNHCR data, the ability to forecast revenue results is fairly accurate. However, the ability to manage costs is not as well developed, as the variation between planned and actual income ranges from 13% in 2022 (boosted by the Ukraine emergency) to -7% in 2024. The forecasted and actual income figures are very close; For costs, the variation between planned and actual figures ranges from -10% to -18%, while the variation between forecasted and actual costs ranges from -4% to -6%. Although the nature of this underspending can be identified by cost categories (see Table 10 below), the evaluation team was not able to obtain explanations for the reasons behind this underspending.¹³⁹

Table 10. UNHCR Korea variance actual versus plan and forecast 2022-2024

Total general (LC)									
Category	Committed Giving Income	One-off Giving Income	Total Income	Direct OPS Cost	Workforce Cost	Operational Cost	UNHCR Staff Cost	ABOD Cost	Total Cost
YTD vs plan¹⁴⁰									
2022	3%	195%	13%	-11%	-29%	-12%	4%	2%	-10%
2023	-3%	45%	1%	-9%	-42%	-11%	-46%	-26%	-17%
2024	-4%	-38%	-7%	-10%	-49%	-13%	-37%	-33%	-18%
YTD vs forecast¹⁴¹									
2022	0%	-4%	-1%	-4%	-5%	-4%	-1%	-1%	-4%
2023	0%	0%	0%	-3%	-3%	-3%	-4%	-56%	-6%
2024	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: KOR Q4 Financial and NGF Reports and Korea Annual Plans

Communication

171. **Despite sustained increases in communication investment over the period, UNHCR Korea has not reached the investment levels of other organisations and resulted in a relatively low public profile compared to other organisations.** To foster greater support, PSP activities needed to rely on a strong communication plan, to boost top of mind and to turn intention to give in actual gifts. The public, although it has heard about UNHCR (IPSOS 2023b), whereas the fundraising environment is dominated by well-established national and international NGOs. UNHCR Korea faced a disadvantage because these NGOs often championed more “marketable” and less contentious causes, such as children’s issues or education. In recent times, climate crisis and disasters have gained increased attention, as these topics have become personal emergencies for the public, which has led to a corresponding increase in charitable giving organisations that work to address these causes. To enhance its communication, UNHCR Korea PSP sustained its marketing and communication investment over the period, with +17% in costs in 2022, +22% in 2023 and +18% in 2024 (see Table 5 above).

172. **Despite the increase in UNHCR Korea’s marketing and communication budget, the review of the AGB Nielsen report shows that for UNHCR Korea to have a competitive share “of voice,” the level of investment in mass media was not adequate.** The Top 10 Advertising Spending report¹⁴² of 2023 and 2024 in the Republic of Korea shows that UNHCR ranked below among other comparable organisations in 2024. Its investment was 2.5 times less than UNICEF’s and 5.6 times less than that of

¹³⁹ When asking about the situation during the field visit data collection, no answer was given by interviewed KII.

¹⁴⁰ Measures performance against strategic or baseline targets set at the beginning of the year.

¹⁴¹ Measures how tracking against updated projections based on current trends, known changes, or actual performance.

¹⁴² Established by AGB Nielsen, the report measures the amounts invested on seven media outlets, including TV, digital, Newspapers and Magazines (Nielsen, 2024).

Children's Fund, which ranked No.1 (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below). The most recent data on brand awareness and perception of UNHCR in the Republic of Korea comes from 2022, as reported in an Ipsos Country Report, released in April 2023 (IPSOS 2023b). As such, it is not possible to assess any gains or losses over the 2021-2024 period. Notably, in 2022, the UNHCR experienced a decline in unaided awareness, in contrast to other organisations that maintained stable levels. However, UNHCR remained well-known, with 9 out of 10 adults recognising the organisation, as reflected in the consistent Aided Awareness results.

173. **Awareness-raising activities such as World Refugee Day events, media partnerships and celebrity advocacy were essential in maintaining UNHCR's visibility in the eyes of the public and donors in a context of low interest in the refugee issue.** Public campaigns, such as the long-running face-to-face subway fundraising initiatives and collaborations with retail brands like Uniqlo¹⁴³, are among the most successful in UNHCR's global PSP history and have contributed to raise public awareness and donor support in the Republic of Korea (UNHCR, 2019). In addition, UNHCR campaigns featuring celebrities¹⁴⁴ from the Republic of Korea were highly valued by most informants as actions that helped to create a positive image of refugees in a generally unfavourable context. However, the use of celebrities for campaigns by various UN agencies has led to confusion and difficulty for the general public in associating the celebrity with the cause being promoted (IPSOS 2023b).

¹⁴³ UNHCR's global partnership with the Japanese retail giant UNIQLO includes annual financial contributions; in-kind donations of recycled clothing; employment of refugees in UNIQLO retail stores; as well as local and regional initiatives such as support for the annual Refugee Film Festivals in Japan and South Korea; UNIQLO's School Education (RISE) Programme; and public awareness campaigns and events.

¹⁴⁴ Jung Woo-sung, who served as a National Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR Korea since 2015, resigned in mid-2024 was widely recognised as a strong and effective defender of refugees.

Figure 10. Media Investment Total AD Spending Trends by NPO Brands for 2024 vs. 2023 (Unit: 1 million KRW)

Brand	2024 Dec YTD 4	2024 Dec YTD SOS	2023 Dec YTD	2023 Dec YTD SOS
Childfund	33,180	20.0%	29,926	19.0%
Good Neighbours	26,093	16.0%	28,641	18.0%
Save the children	18,634	11.0%	16,906	11.0%
UNICEF	12,836	8.0%	18,004	11.0%
Modecins sans Frontieres	9,640	6.0%	9,089	6.0%
Korean Federation of Volunteering	7,613	5.0%	3,937	2.0%
Miral Welfare Foundation	7,198	4.0%	1,381	1.0%
World Vision	7,219	4.0%	8,867	6.0%
Oxfam	5,965	4.0%	8,098	5.0%
Community Chest Of Korea	9,084	5.0%	5,895	4.0%
Concern Worldwide	5,989	4.0%	5,046	3.0%
UNHCR	5,436	3.0%	3,826	2.0%
Greenpeace	4,086	2.0%	4,971	3.0%
Amnesty	2,585	2.0%	3,303	2.0%
Westart	2,413	1.0%	3,073	2.0%
Food for the hungry	2,102	1.0%	3,092	2.0%
Plan Korea	1,935	1.0%	2,780	2.0%
Good people	2,015	1.0%	96	0.0%
International Fellowship of Christians	1,024	1.0%	955	1.0%
Compassion	313	0.0%	151	0.0%
Senior Healthcare Sharing Foundation	100	0.0%	0	0.0%
World Food Programme	40	0.0%	371	0.0%
WWFKOREA	64	0.0%	0	0.0%

Source: Data based on AGB Nielsen Media Korea featured in OR Q4 2024 Narrative Report

Key success factors and challenges in UNHCR's positioning and partnerships in the country

174. **UNHCR's clear mandate, institutional credibility, and operational professionalism are key factors that have significantly contributed to its strategic positioning with government entities, civil society, and—albeit to a lesser extent—the private sector.** Its trusted reputation¹⁴⁵—particularly among national institutions—has enabled alignment with the Republic of Korea's aspiration to become a top global donor. This was further reinforced by UNHCR's principled and visible response to the

¹⁴⁵ In addition to the recognition of the UNHCR expressed by several interviewees, the IPSOS study (IPSOS Country Report: South Korea (April 2023) – UNHCR Brand Measurement) also reflects positive levels of recognition. Regular communication and meetings between senior UNHCR officials and Korean institutions, such as the four high-level UNHCR missions to Seoul between 2022 and 2024 and the MOFA mission to Geneva in 2024, have helped to build the organisation's reputation among national institutions (Donor Profile: Republic of Korea, 2024).

Ukraine crisis, which increased public trust and donor confidence (IPSOS 2023b).¹⁴⁶ UNHCR's alignment with the Republic of Korea's ODA priorities—especially through support for the Grand Bargain commitments—has strengthened its relationship with MoFA and KOICA.¹⁴⁷ In parallel, the organisation's expertise and capacity-building efforts have deepened engagement with civil society actors, expanding its role as a normative leader in refugee protection. UNHCR is widely recognised for its ability to provide guidance and standards, particularly in a context where affiliation with the UN system enhances institutional legitimacy.¹⁴⁸ Together, these factors enabled broader institutional and, to a lesser extent, public support¹⁴⁹ for UNHCR's mission.

175. Despite these strengths, several constraints have limited the full realisation of UNHCR's strategic positioning and partnerships in the Republic of Korea. Although it is an external factor to UNHCR's work, the turnover of government officials (OECD, 2024)¹⁵⁰ has influenced the retention of institutional memory and the development of a nuanced understanding of UNHCR's mandate within national institutions, while brand confusion with other UN agencies has at times created image risks¹⁵¹, particularly in politically sensitive contexts. Domestically, low public support for refugee issues inside the Republic of Korea¹⁵²—relative to concern for overseas crises—has made it more difficult for UNHCR to expand its civil society partnerships and grassroots legitimacy. Although UNHCR has engaged national NGOs and facilitated international exposure (e.g. through KCOC), its partnerships are often seen as limited in scope.¹⁵³ As outlined in previous sections, there have been opportunities to strengthen ties with national institutions—such as KOICA—and a broader range of CSOs¹⁵⁴, which typically operate with limited resources (UNHCR, 2023), thereby enabling UNHCR to expand its influence over key stakeholders.¹⁵⁵ The engagement with influential political and cultural stakeholders, such as Members of the National Assembly or public figures, remained underdeveloped.¹⁵⁶

176. Critically, public perception of refugees remains central to the effectiveness of UNHCR's work across protection, advocacy, communications, and both public and private fundraising. Yet,

¹⁴⁶ In 2022, UNHCR Korea was regarded as trustworthy, especially by people over 55; donation intentions were high, close to 3 in 10 among those who knew UNHCR, and six points higher than in 2020, aligning with the upward trend driven by the conflict in Ukraine.

¹⁴⁷ See the evaluation question on relevance for more details.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁹ Although the Ipsos study and UNHCR documents (UNHCR Korea's 2024 fundraising and communications plan) suggest some improvement in Korean society's empathy towards refugees between 2020 and 2022, multiple documents and interviews reiterate the unfavourable prevailing perception of the arrival of refugees and migrants in Korean society. Public perception concerns have emerged as a significant worry in UNHCR strategy and planning, requiring improved attention.

¹⁵⁰ In addition to the comments of several interviewees, the OECD's analysis of official development assistance from the Republic of Korea has recently documented the effect of turnover among public officials (including MoFA and KOICA) on work and relations with international organisations.

¹⁵¹ In 2024, amid allegations that UNRWA had employed members of Hamas during the ongoing conflict in Gaza, the similarity in pronunciation between the two organisations' logos led Korean news agencies to incorrectly report that UNHCR had employed Hamas members who carried out the deadly assault in October 2023 (UN News, 2024).

¹⁵² In addition to interviews, UNHCR surveys and reports cited above, including UNHCR Republic of Korea Strategy 2023 - 2025, several publications on this subject are available. See, for example: (Rich et al., 2021), (Rich TS et al., 2023), (Rich TS et al., 2023), (Lowy Institute, 2018) and (Choi et al., 2024).

¹⁵³ Civil society partners focused on protection and those engaged in resource mobilisation represent two distinct groups for UNHCR Korea. The observations described here primarily concern civil society partners involved in resource mobilisation. In contrast, CSOs working in protection view UNHCR very positively, as confirmed by multiple KIIs. They recognize UNHCR's unique role in empowering refugee and human rights groups to actively advocate for refugee protection policies. Notably, since the recruitment of a dedicated legal expert at UNHCR Korea, collaboration with legal advocacy groups has significantly deepened, leading to stronger legal support for refugees through both litigation and procedural challenges.

¹⁵⁴ In recent years, UNHCR has developed effective partnerships with organisations specialising in asylum, international protection, and refugee assistance (e.g. the Korea Refugee Rights Network, the Rainbow Refugee Network, and the Korean Bar Association). However, resource constraints and contextual factors have made it difficult to diversify collaboration with organisations in other relevant areas.

¹⁵⁵ There are small NGOs with which other international organisations have successfully organised training courses with the support of a UNHCR regional training facilitator, with whom no opportunities for collaboration have been developed.

¹⁵⁶ Information collected shows that UNHCR's engagement with broader stakeholder groups remained underdeveloped, despite their potential to amplify public advocacy and generate wider societal support. The resignation of the actor Jung Woo-sung as UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador in 2024 has left a void that has yet to be filled. The collaboration with social media influencers and prominent figures in popular culture—as well as the establishment of supporter groups such as "Friends of UNHCR"—outlined in various UNHCR strategy and planning documents, does not appear to have progressed significantly to date. Compared to other international organisations, UNHCR's networking appears more limited, particularly in terms of engaging high-profile individuals from political, social, and cultural spheres with strong domestic influence, such as those serving on National Committee boards. Indeed, UNHCR's 2023–2025 Strategy indicates that, in line with practices adopted by other international organisations, it would be advisable to seek the support of well-known board members or equivalent figures.

despite the strategic convergence of objectives between the PSP and CO teams, efforts to align engagement across teams remained informal. This lack of integrated planning has affected the organisation's ability to identify and reach overlapping audiences—such as the media, general public, lawmakers, academia, and refugees themselves—and to develop coordinated, context-sensitive messaging. In the absence of a clearly established joint framework, strategic alignment remained ad hoc, and a unified assessment of operational risks was lacking in cases where messaging diverged.

KEQ8. How have UNHCR's policy and legal support contributed to longer-term system changes and protection for asylum-seekers? (Sustainability)

177. UNHCR's supervisory role in ensuring Member States' compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention, as recognised in the Republic of Korea's Refugee Act, has enabled high-level policy dialogue, legal advocacy, and expert support for improving protection standards and national asylum system functioning. While the Refugee Act marked a historic milestone—being the first standalone refugee law in Asia—its implementation remains uneven, and its full potential to deliver more ambitious and sustainable protection reforms has not yet been realised.

178. UNHCR's policy and legal engagement has fostered gradual yet systemic improvements through officer training, RSD quality initiatives, and formalised consultations with adjudicating bodies. The legal anchoring of resettlement mechanisms, along with partnerships with civil society, has enabled notable progress—particularly in expanding legal representation and advancing strategic litigation, which has resulted in durable legal reforms such as improved detention conditions. However, continued reliance on humanitarian status, restricted access to justice, and the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation remain structural constraints that limit the sustainability of protection gains.

179. **UNHCR played a pivotal role in the drafting and enactment of the Refugee Act. Article 28 of the Act explicitly acknowledges UNHCR's supervisory mandate, instructing the MoJ and the Refugee Committee to facilitate the organisation's oversight of the Convention and Protocol's implementation.¹⁵⁷ This legal recognition, which grants UNHCR formal access to engage with national authorities, is relatively rare and signifies strong alignment between national legislation and international refugee law.** The Act established an institutional foundation for protection, and temporary protection arrangements for Afghans, Ukrainians, and Myanmar nationals reflect the Republic of Korea's evolving response capacity. However, these arrangements remain ad hoc and are not embedded in a permanent subsidiary protection framework. UNHCR's ongoing efforts, such as co-developing training curricula for RSD officers, show a commitment to building systemic, long-term institutional capacity. Nonetheless, overreliance on humanitarian status, resource constraints, and operational gaps in the asylum system undermine legal continuity and the consolidation of protection outcomes.¹⁵⁸

180. **UNHCR's advocacy helped translate Article 24 of the Refugee Act into a pilot resettlement programme that has operated uninterrupted since 2015, doubling its annual quota to 60 places in an effort to make up for the gap that occurred during the COVID-19 period.** The programme's

¹⁵⁷ This provision reflects the obligation under Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which requires States to cooperate with UNHCR.

¹⁵⁸ See the previous sections for analyses of the challenges and gaps in access to asylum and RSD, and in developing the national protection environment.

comprehensive integration package represents a high-quality proof of concept; the ongoing qualitative survey of beneficiaries is designed to inform possible scale-up to other refugee categories and to complementary pathways such as higher-education visas. By anchoring resettlement in statute, engaging the Foreigner Policy Committee at prime-ministerial level, and positioning itself to provide further capacity-building, UNHCR has created a platform for sustainable third-country solutions. However, its impact is tempered by the limited size of current quotas and the disparity between support offered to resettled refugees and that available to those recognised in-country.

181. **UNHCR’s policy and legal support has contributed to tangible system-level changes, including the formalisation of dialogue with adjudicating bodies, initial improvements in the quality of RSD, and the establishment of a legally mandated resettlement channel. This resettlement mechanism presents opportunities for future expansion and long-term continuity.** UNHCR Korea’s MYS 2023-2025 shows that sustained policy engagement has embedded several durable safeguards but has yet to shift some structural bottlenecks that limit long-term protection. At the institutional level, a cooperative relationship with the MoJ and the Refugee Appeal Division of the (RAD) has led to bi-annual consultations on RAD’s draft RSD guidelines and to a cycle of induction and thematic trainings for both first-instance officers from Refugee Policy Division (RPD) and appellate officers. These initiatives have begun to standardise decision-making practice and open space for procedural reforms, an important foundation for future efficiency gains, yet their reach remains modest (small cohorts, time-bound courses).

182. **Through sustained engagement in collaboration with its partners, UNHCR has contributed to gradual yet enduring improvements in the national asylum system.** The outcomes achieved through strategic litigation (as outlined in previous sections) have been pivotal in bringing about lasting changes to the national legal framework in favour of refugee protection. Other initiatives, such as the establishment of collaborative platforms like KORRIN and long-term support for civil society capacity-building, have further strengthened the resilience of the protection system. These efforts have enhanced the ability of national organisations to identify the specific needs and vulnerabilities of at-risk groups and to sustain advocacy and policy dialogue aimed at securing lasting, systemic improvements. UNHCR’s collaboration with actors such as the Duroo Public Interest Law Center and the Korean Bar Association has contributed to expanding legal representation, particularly for vulnerable asylum - seekers, including those in detention and marginalised communities such as LGBTI refugees. In interviews, civil society representatives expressed the view that the Republic of Korea has the potential to become a regional model for refugee protection in Asia, with possible ripple effects in countries such as Japan, and Thailand. UNHCR’s promotion of Quality Initiatives in RSD¹⁵⁹ and continued efforts to foster systemic, sustainable change were recognised by stakeholders as important yet constrained by the Republic of Korea’s relatively slow adaptation to its evolving role as a country of refugee reception.

KEQ9. What approaches or mechanisms have been established to ensure long-term support from the private and public sectors regarding resource mobilisation? (Sustainability)

183. UNHCR Korea has established a multi-pronged strategy to ensure long-term support from both public and private sectors for resource mobilisation, rooted in sustained political engagement, institutional partnerships, and the development of a robust donor base. At the governmental level, trust have positioned UNHCR as a key partner in the Republic of Korea’s ODA landscape and priorities (including the H-D-P Nexus). Notably, the 2024 MoU with KOICA has institutionalised a

¹⁵⁹ These initiatives aim: a) to inject transparency and accountability into asylum procedures, and b) push for procedural fairness and capacity building within the MoJ.

commitment to multi-year funding, projected at US\$ 7–10 million annually, and aligned with the Republic of Korea's pledges under the Grand Bargain to expand flexible contributions. Strategic advocacy through high-level platforms, such as the Global Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Forum involving 29 Members of the National Assembly, further enhances UNHCR's visibility and policy influence. These mechanisms have been reinforced by the Republic of Korea's expanding humanitarian commitments, where UNHCR is among the top five UN agency partners.

184. In the private sector, UNHCR has cultivated long-term sustainability through donor base diversification and engagement strategies. As of end-2024, the Republic of Korea had 241,198 individual donors, 86% of whom were regular contributors—a key asset for income predictability. Enhanced investment in donor retention and conversion strategies, including a nearly 30% planned increase in donor care expenditure and over 82% growth in upgrade and Middle-Value donor initiatives for 2025, reflects a commitment to long-term sustainability. Parallel efforts include cultivating partnerships with high-potential corporate and religious actors, whose shared values and visibility are expected to offer durable support. However, there are gaps in corporate alignment and underdeveloped legacy giving mechanisms. While initiatives such as “Gift in Will” show promise amid generational wealth transfer in the Republic of Korea, tax ineligibility and low public awareness hinder maturity.

185. **UNHCR Korea has played a key role in driving slow but steady changes in refugee awareness in the Republic of Korea, laying the foundation for sustainable support from both private and public sectors.** External stakeholders consistently emphasize the organisation's significant contribution to transforming the understanding of refugee issues over time. Interest in these issues is particularly strong in academia, where younger generations now have better access to the agenda. Several universities offer refugee-related courses, and some have established dedicated research centres focused on refugee issues. Public awareness campaigns, events such as World Refugee Day, and media engagement, all supported by UNHCR, have been instrumental in creating a more welcoming environment for refugees.

186. **Trust and credibility play a critical role in enabling UNHCR to mobilise sustainable resources from the public sector, reinforcing its position as a key partner for the Republic of Korea's government.** The signing of an MoU with KOICA (in April 2024) laid the foundation for future multi-year cooperation to effectively coordinate available resources to increase resilience to conflict-affected fragile states. This agreement will provide UNHCR with approximately US\$ 7-10M annually, aligning with the Republic of Korea's pledge under the Grand Bargain to implement multi-year contributions and more unearmarked funding.

187. **At the legislative level, UNHCR's engagement with Members of National Assembly through its participation in the Global Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Forum, provides an opportunity for high-level political advocacy to secure government commitment to refugee protection and financial contributions to humanitarian action.** Launched in August 2024 by members of the Republic of Korea's National Assembly, the Global Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Forum is a bipartisan initiative involving 29 legislators aimed at advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global humanitarian priorities. According to interviews, the Forum seeks to elevate the Republic of Korea's contributions to international humanitarian efforts; UNHCR holds the status of a "Special Member," alongside five other international organisations, positioning itself uniquely within the emerging humanitarian national policy architecture. This presents a strategic opportunity for UNHCR Korea to elevate its visibility, reinforce its policy influence, and solidify alliances with key political actors.

188. **UNHCR's partnership could be more direct with CSOs, valuing their unique role in the field of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation in the Republic of Korea.** Continued partnership and a win-win position with civil society networks, such as the KCOC, strengthening advocacy efforts, enhancing resource mobilisation, and improving the implementation of humanitarian

programs were mentioned by various key informants as potential partnership paths. Such collaboration could amplify public awareness, build local support for refugee issues, and create a more cohesive approach to addressing global challenges, ultimately fostering more effective and sustainable outcomes for both parties. UNHCR's two groups of NGOs partners, those focused on protection and those focused on resource mobilisation and partnerships, have distinct views on UNHCR Korea. The former group holds highly positive views on their engagement with UNHCR Korea, while the latter tends to view their relationship with UNHCR Korea as more distant and reiterated that they may not be as valued by and engaged with UNHCR Korea as much as could be possible.

189. **Efforts made over the years and maintained from 2022 to 2024 by PSP in the Republic of Korea to grow the donor base, and in particular to increase the number of regular donors, whether directly acquired or converted from OO donors, are an important factor in securing funding for the years to come.**¹⁶⁰ At the end of 2024, UNHCR Korea had a solid donor base of 241,198 individual donors, with 86% of them being regular.¹⁶¹ This is a great asset for income generation and its predictability in the mid-term. However, UNHCR Korea is not immune to the downward trend in the market. Since 2023, the balance between the level of acquisition and the level of attrition has been negative, both for regular and one-off donors, and their decline has worsened in 2024.¹⁶²
190. **Available data demonstrated a commitment to improving donor retention, and converting OO to Regular donors and upgrading, as well as growing, the Middle Value donor segment, and this is now enhanced in the PSP plan.** The investment in Donor Care and Communication is planned to increase by 29.8% in 2025, the increase in costs for Middle Value Donors and for Upgrade and Conversion will be over 82%. Proactive fundraising for emergencies, along with creating connections between UNHCR's activities and climate change issues to which the donors in the Republic of Korea are sensitive, have taken place and are planned to help enhance UNHCR's visibility and profile.
191. **UNHCR currently lacks a reliable "Gift in Will" (GIW) pipeline to generate sustained revenue in the years to come.** Significant investment in GIW was done in 2023 and after a minimal budget allocated to it 2024, new investment is planned in 2025, 25% higher than in 2023. Gift in Will as an income stream for non-profits is developing, however, it is not yet mature in the Republic of Korea as compared to other markets. In 2022, one quarter of adults in the Republic of Korea had heard about Gift in Will (IPSOS, 2023a). On the positive side, the expected wealth transfer from the baby boomer generation to their descendants is likely to present opportunities. One significant barrier identified by the evaluation is UNHCR Korea's ineligibility for tax deductions on the amounts transferred, which could explain why UNHCR Korea lags behind some peer organisations. In the long term, leveraging the potential of High-Value donors (including Major Donors, Corporations, and Foundations) through large-scale, multi-year commitments will be a key area for improvement.¹⁶³ As of the end of 2024, there were a few partnerships in place, but they showed promising prospects.
192. **UNHCR's active engagement in advocacy campaigns, its collaboration with media and corporate actors and its involvement with refugee film festivals and legal interventions to protect refugees and asylum-seekers have influenced public attitudes, but at a limited scale.** UNHCR organised awareness campaigns (such as World Refugee Day and Universal Birth Registration) to change public narratives and tackle misinformation. Partnerships with religious groups and corporate actors helped. Although available surveys show a slight improvement in public opinion regarding the refugee population, an unfavourable perception continues to prevail.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ The number of years can be estimated according to the average lifetime of donors depending on their acquisition channels and to the performances of reactivation activities in place.

¹⁶¹ UNHCR PSP data.

¹⁶² See Effectiveness question.

¹⁶³ See Effectiveness question.

¹⁶⁴ UNHCR Brand Measurement. Ipsos Country Report: South Korea. April 2023. See also UNHCR Korea annual reports, national publications (see references in page 19).

193. **Partnership with the interfaith organisation KCRP is particularly valuable for the future, as it is grounded in lasting, shared values, making it more resilient to market fluctuations, while also engaging youth groups.** Additionally, even though the partnership with TOPTEN10 is still in its nascency, this partnership can significantly boost UNHCR's visibility through its hundreds of shops nationwide during their 3-year collaboration. Furthermore, once this partnership is well established, TOPTEN10's pilot programme to hire 10 refugees per year has the potential to serve as a compelling case with which to approach other companies for similar support.

5 LESSONS LEARNED

Protection

194. **UNHCR Korea's multi-stakeholder engagement model has proven effective in expanding protection space.** The strengthening and diversification of partnerships—including with CSOs, legislative bodies, and legal aid providers—has been critical not only for consolidating recent progress, but also for mitigating the risk of regression. This experience highlights the importance of broad-based alliances in advancing and safeguarding international protection standards in politically sensitive contexts.

Public sector and resource mobilisation

195. **Strategically aligning resource mobilisation with national development agendas can significantly enhance both the quality and sustainability of donor contributions.** UNHCR Korea's experience demonstrates that alignment with the Republic of Korea's ODA priorities has been instrumental in building stronger governmental partnerships. This approach has not only deepened political engagement but also resulted in tangible financial gains—including increased allocations of flexible, multi-year, and unearmarked funding.

196. **In dynamic institutional contexts, sustained and proactive engagement with the public sector is essential to maintaining strong partnerships and resource flows.** UNHCR Korea's experience shows that deliberate relationship-building and consistent communication with institutional counterparts—particularly during periods of transition and rotation—can help preserve institutional knowledge, reinforce visibility, and foster donor confidence. This approach has contributed to more stable collaboration and resilient partnerships with national institutions over time.

Communication and fundraising

197. **Narrative strategies that humanise refugee experiences and connect them to national histories can powerfully enhance public engagement and donor support.** The use of community-based success stories—such as the well-integrated Jumma refugee community in Gimpo—and parallels with the Republic of Korea's own experiences of displacement and resilience have helped bridge perception gaps between the public and refugee communities. These emotionally resonant narratives have proven more effective than UNHCR's traditional informational approaches in building empathy and mobilising support.

198. **High public trust in the UN system can enhance access and influence, but realising this advantage requires clear brand differentiation and unified communication.** UNHCR Korea has benefited from the strong trust that the public places in the UN—particularly among older, educated, and higher-income groups—boosting its fundraising and advocacy reach. However, persistent confusion between UNHCR and other UN entities highlights the need for strategic brand positioning. In response, UNHCR Korea has taken steps to integrate communication functions across PSP and non-PSP teams to reinforce a coherent, recognisable identity and better reflect its unique protection mandate.

6 CONCLUSIONS

STRATEGIC DIMENSION

C1) Positioning – UNHCR has developed a strategic and expanding—yet primarily transactional—partnership with the Republic of Korea to support its global protection mandate, while facing structural barriers that limit progress in advancing international protection standards and broader compliance with international law and protection standards. The increase in public funding for UNHCR illustrates the growing synergies between the Republic of Korea—an emerging actor in international and regional humanitarian affairs—and UNHCR, as a globally trusted organisation for protection and assistance. In this context, UNHCR’s engagement in the Republic of Korea reflects a structural dilemma: on one hand, the organisation seeks to deepen fundraising and strategic partnerships with a key donor amid global humanitarian funding shortfalls; on the other, it operates in a national environment where its capacity to influence asylum policy reform and expand access to protection remains limited—despite its formal supervisory role under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

OPERATIONAL DIMENSION

C2) Protection ecosystem and localisation - UNHCR has played a pivotal role in fostering an ecosystem of national organisations working on asylum and international protection, creating greater capacity for analysis, advocacy, and assistance, and laying the foundation for advancing localisation. This ecosystem includes civil society and faith-based organisations, academic institutions and researchers, as well as actors specialising in legal aid and social services for vulnerable groups. However, progress remains dependent on a small pool of aligned stakeholders, and the engagement from the private sector is limited. While levels of organisational development and autonomy vary, the technical capacity now available suggests that specialised national actors could assume a more central and visible role in relation to national institutions and the wider public—particularly in a context where refugee issues remain politically and socially sensitive.

C3) Legal influence and protection environment - Despite a limited operational footprint, UNHCR Korea has made significant contributions to broadening the national protection environment—establishing jurisprudence in support of protection, embedding procedural safeguards, and promoting rights-based practices—even in the face of persistent gaps and risks of regression. By providing sustained technical input into legislation, judicial processes, and institutional capacity-building, UNHCR has pragmatically leveraged legal expertise and targeted training to foster closer alignment with international protection standards. Nonetheless, political sensitivities surrounding refugee issues continue to constrain public discourse and policy prioritisation. In addition, underinvestment in protection expertise across organisations, limited legal aid capacity, and the absence of a sustained, tailored communication strategy hinder the scalability and continuity of progress.

C4) PSP performance – UNHCR’s limited capacity to scale investment in the increasingly competitive Republic of Korea market has exposed a persistent gap between market potential and strategic execution, leading to stagnating private-sector income. While sustained investment in IG was contextually appropriate and aligned with donor preferences, it remained under-resourced relative to growth targets, particularly as acquisition costs increased. In parallel, alternative channels—such as legacy giving and digital peer-to-peer fundraising—were not systematically pursued, limiting opportunities for diversification and long-term sustainability.

C5) PSP sustainability – UNHCR Korea’s substantial base of private donors, supported by strong public-sector engagement, provides a solid platform for sustaining future income. However, the strategy faces growing risks due to rising donor attrition and limited investment in donor retention. Pilot initiatives launched since 2023 have shown potential to diversify support. In the corporate sector, shared-value partnerships (e.g. TOPTEN10) have contributed to expanding donor constituencies and fostering more inclusive narratives. However, several gaps—such as the absence of a structured legacy-

giving programme and the underdevelopment of high-value donor engagement, reflected in low returns and the lack of a formal cultivation strategy—weaken the diversification and resilience of UNHCR Korea’s fundraising model.

C6) Public funding strategy –Government recognition of UNHCR’s role within the Republic of Korea’s humanitarian priorities have contributed to a sharp increase in government contributions. However, UNHCR Korea’s ability to fully leverage funding and partnership opportunities with government actors has been constrained by limited thematic alignment—particularly in emerging areas such as climate action—alongside modest donor visibility and accountability gaps. Institutional mechanisms such as donor focal points, regional budget flexibility, and results-based NGO frameworks supported timely micro-adaptation to emerging opportunities. Nonetheless, UNHCR has not yet fully integrated key thematic priorities for the Republic of Korea, such as climate change and food security, nor has it consistently delivered strategic visibility or robust field-level reporting. At times, delayed approval processes, and misaligned planning cycles have impeded rapid, coordinated action.

C7) Communication and public engagement – The reach and emotional resonance of UNHCR Korea’s communication efforts to humanise refugees and highlight their potential societal contributions have remained limited, largely due to challenges inherent in the socio-cultural and political landscape. Low public interest and scepticism toward refugee-related issues have hindered efforts to connect these narratives to the everyday lives of citizens. While the UN enjoys high levels of trust in the Republic of Korea, UNHCR has faced difficulties in developing a differentiated brand identity and bespoke messaging. Limited investment in mass media outreach has further constrained its ability to counter prevailing stereotypes and prejudices. Nevertheless, the experience of other international organisations suggests that emotionally resonant humanitarian communication is achievable in the context of the Republic of Korea.

ORGANISATIONAL DIMENSION

C8) Internal coordination - Coordination between the CO and PSP teams has notably improved but certain shortcomings have affected the coherence and overall effectiveness of the CO’s engagement with external audiences. The nature of communication under PSP has helped to align UNHCR’s messaging and campaigns for diverse audiences in the Republic of Korea. However, this progress coexists with obstacles, such as separate reporting lines, unsynchronised planning systems, and contrasting organisational cultures, which result in fragmentation and limited shared accountability. The successes achieved through collaboration between the ER and PSP teams, such as joint campaigns and unified narratives, demonstrate the tangible advantages of closer coordination.

C9) Organisational model - UNHCR’s presence in the Republic of Korea is primarily driven by the need to mobilise resources and leverage the Republic of Korea’s growing international influence. However, the current model—a (CO) integrating a PSP unit—does not fully reflect UNHCR’s strategic focus on national resource mobilisation. Although the CO has evolved to include PSP functions, the structure currently sits between a “traditional” CO (constrained in its ability to advance asylum and protection issues) and a fully developed PSP operation capable of scaling fundraising in a competitive donor environment. In the absence of a benchmarking exercise comparing UNHCR’s presence in other high-income markets with strong resource mobilisation mandates, it remains unclear whether the existing model is optimal. Alternative configurations—potentially offering greater localisation, thematic focus, and operational efficiency—may be better suited to meeting UNHCR Korea’s dual mandates of policy engagement and fundraising.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ e.g. National Associations Partners, such as Japan for UNHCR, UK for UNHCR, Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented below reflect the discussions and interactions between UNHCR (Country Office and Evaluation Office) and the evaluation team during the preparation of the final version of the report. While the recommendations take into account UNHCR’s context of severe budgetary constraints, their implementation will likely need to be modulated or reprioritised in light of the current global and organisational uncertainty.

Recommendation – R1) DONOR CENTRICITY - Be more “donor and partner” centric.		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
<p>1.1 Enhance the level of CO-led services vis-à-vis public donors in the Republic of Korea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve responsiveness and better meet donor expectations in terms of trust-building through robust monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (ensure that proposals and reporting include clear value-for-money, visibility metrics, and long-term outcomes to appeal to the Republic of Korea donors’ demand for evidence-based results (in line with RBAP Joined-up approach). • Establish informal working-level channels of communication with KOICA. • Develop more frequent and timely touchpoints with government officials (e.g. KOICA, legislators). • Identify and propose projects to KOICA to be funded in countries where bilateral aid is not possible or where there is large-scale presence of refugees. • Invite KOICA officials to visit project sites for firsthand engagement. • Leverage KOICA’s new programme modality for fragile states in collaboration with other multilateral agencies. 	Senior management team	Short term
<p>1.2 Increase the level of UNHCR engagement vis-à-vis national public donors based outside the Republic of Korea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase engagement of UNHCR Senior Representatives with the Republic of Korea’s top officials.¹⁶⁶ • Enhance field level communication capacity and activity - through relevant UNHCR country offices - with the Republic of Korea. 	CO Representative, RBAP	Medium term
<p>1.3 Reinforce relations with MoFA that support it as an international player vis-à-vis forcibly displaced and stateless persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical advice and follow-up on the Republic of Korea’s commitments regarding forcibly displaced and stateless persons.¹⁶⁷ 	Senior management team, RBAP	Short term

¹⁶⁶ E.g. one-to-one meetings between senior UNHCR staff, the Republic of Korea embassy officials in Geneva and the Republic of Korea Embassies in relevant countries.

¹⁶⁷ E.g. the Global Refugee Forum, the Grand Bargain, etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share insights on M&E practices; showcase tangible, field-level results—especially those that can be highlighted in the National Assembly. • Proactively engage in shaping the Republic of Korea mid- to long-term development cooperation policies by aligning UNHCR proposals with national ODA priorities (e.g. climate, gender equality, fragile states), thereby enhancing the relevance of UNHCR’s portfolio and increasing the potential to access larger, more flexible KOICA grants. • Prepare and present projects in countries with which the Republic of Korea would find it difficult to establish bilateral relations, but which are of interest in terms of foreign aid and KOICA’s strategy. • Engage in selective high-level diplomacy¹⁶⁸ to maintain political attention, create openings for increased funding or policy flexibility, and clarify roles and communication channels between UNHCR and KOICA across all three institutional levels (country office, regional bureau, and headquarters). 		
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Recommendation – R2) Advocacy - Broaden advocacy beyond government engagement and strengthen it through evidence use and joint positioning with partners.		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
<p>2.1 Develop a multi-level advocacy strategy that extends beyond MOFA and KOICA to include parliamentarians, local government actors, civil society partners, and thematic networks (e.g. climate, migration, human rights), in order to diversify institutional allies.</p>	Senior management team	Medium term
<p>2.2 Strengthen advocacy efforts with MOFA by investing in evidence-based advocacy products—such as policy briefs, impact stories, and data visualisations—that clearly connect UNHCR’s global priorities (e.g. statelessness, refugee inclusion) to the Republic of Korea’s foreign policy and ODA objectives, thereby increasing the likelihood of securing additional public-sector contributions.</p>	CO Representative, PSP	Short term
<p>2.3 Link domestic advocacy efforts to the Republic of Korea’s global commitments (e.g. Global Refugee Forum, SDGs, DAC membership) to position the country as a global leader rather than solely a donor.</p>	External relations, PSP, RBAP	Short term
<p>2.4 Foster joint advocacy platforms with CSOs, academia, and private sector actors to build legitimacy, and broaden social acceptance of refugees.</p>	Senior management team	Medium term

¹⁶⁸ In light of the numerous layers within the UNHCR organisation, i.e. different divisions, different services at global, regional and local levels.

Recommendation – R3) PSP - Ensure the growth of PSP income, with IG and a significantly larger proportion of income derived from PPH.

Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
<p>3.1 Strengthen the digital acquisition programme and multichannel approach together with a strong conversion programme.¹⁶⁹</p>	PSP	Short term
<p>3.2 Enhance donor relationships and retention strategies—particularly for One-Off donors—by applying granular segmentation and designing tailored, donor-centric engagement journeys. This should include personalised outreach such as impact reports, thank-you campaigns, and annual donor summaries, as well as the development of two-way, experiential engagement opportunities (e.g. volunteering, events, ambassador programmes).</p>	PSP	Short term
<p>3.3 As soon as financial prospects allow again, reassess the pertinence of an in-house team for specific F2F opportunities and needs; while maintaining a significant level of investment in F2F activities.</p>	PSP, RBAP	Medium term
<p>3.4 Elevate High-Net-Worth Individual (HNWI) giving and "Gifts in Will" (GIW) to strategic priorities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively networking and initiating outbound engagement with wealthy individuals and relevant communities. • Establishing an Honor Society—drawing inspiration from models such as the Community Chest. • Providing targeted training to PPH staff on the GIW approach to strengthen internal capacity. 	PSP	Short term
<p>3.5 Foster an innovation- and test-fail-learn-culture; as much as the financial situation allows, test new giving vehicles; develop positive and “entertaining” activities and messages in line with “K-culture” that create interactive relationships with current and prospective donors.</p>	PSP	Medium term
<p>3.6 Increase level of capitalisation of UNHCR regional and global best practices (e.g. UNHCR could get inspired by UNHCR Italy for corporate, by UNHCR Switzerland for the links with the world of art and crypto-currency).</p>	PSP, RBAP	Medium term

Recommendation – R4) Optimise PPH set-up and enhance PPH skills

¹⁶⁹ On-line or off-line with telemarketing.

Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
4.1 Establish a mentorship arrangement with a senior PPH manager from another UNHCR office with a strong track record in PPH performance and skills (when financial conditions permit, consider recruiting a senior PPH manager to strengthen leadership and execution capacity within the team).	PPH, CO Representative,	Short term
4.2 Optimise PPH organisational set up , making a distinction between back-office and outbound/portfolio management roles.	PSP	Short term
4.3 Develop on-going prospect research capacity, both internally and with external service providers.	PSP	Short term
4.4 Develop PPH staff networking and sales skills through training of current staff.	PSP	Medium term

Recommendation – R5) COMMUNICATION - More actively leverage the existing resources and multiplier power of other stakeholders, in particular to amplify positive stories to change the public sentiment towards refugees into empathy.		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
5.1 Adopt an audience-centric approach to regularly informing the Korean public, donors and policymakers of the commitments that other Korean stakeholders are making to support forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the Republic of Korea and internationally. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop further and highlight engagement of / with faith-based leaders. • Actively communicate what MoFA & KOICA are doing with UNHCR to the public. • Provide documented evidence of the impact achieved and show how it is aligned with Korea's ODA and leadership humanitarian framework. 	PSP, senior management team	Short term
5.2 Involve more/better key stakeholders in communication activities and events and leverage media partnerships and K-culture: influencers, GWA, friends of UNHCR, media editorials and coverage on events, partnerships with businesses and tech industry, joining existing events, looking for communication complementarity with local organisations, co-creating campaigns, etc, for increasing UNHCR visibility and messaging.	PSP	Short term

<p>5.3 Focus strategically on activities with either a big reach or that are directed towards influential audiences (e.g. activities that would receive media coverage or creating positive social media buzz and activism, that would involve a wide public e.g. resume bridge walk Seoul).</p>	PSP	Medium term
<p>5.4 Maintain branding and communications activities to support PSP development, look for pro bono support and creative approaches from partners to compensate for the limited current investment capacity.</p>	PSP	Short term
<p>5.5 Develop a more granular segmentation of the target audience for both communication and PSP purposes.</p>	PSP	Short term
<p>5.6 Produce campaigns and events which can have a greater resonance with the Korean public (e.g. more human storytelling, KOICA campaign, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure content is adapted to Korean cultural narratives and whenever needed strengthen brand and message localisation. • Focus on empathy, human stories, contributions of refugees. 		Medium term

Recommendation – R6) PARTNERSHIPS - Establish additional multi-year and high value corporate partnerships. ¹⁷⁰		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
<p>6.1 Extensively cultivate existing partnerships for identification of new opportunities (e.g. matching gift with TOPten10 staff, more communication/events with Taekwondo' Olympic medallist, or similar public figures).</p>	PSP	Medium term
<p>6.2 Tailor-make multi-year packages for support (i.e. in cash, in kind, refugee employment, etc), from companies whose profiles best align with UNHCR's values and activities; create a strong collaboration programme with attractive benefits.</p>	PSP	Medium term
<p>6.3 Leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) priorities to develop cause-related marketing initiatives with corporate partners, enhancing both UNHCR's visibility and income generation.</p>	PSP, CO Representative	Medium term

¹⁷⁰ Beyond cash grants.

Recommendation – R7) JOINT PLANNING - Develop cross-cutting strategic and operational planning capacity.		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
7.1 Align planning cycles between CO and PSP: Implement a formal joint-planning process, and more fully integrate all units of CO and PSP in the design and implementation of a communication plan with a cross-cutting planning process.	Senior management team, PSP	Short term
7.2 PSP to work closely with CO to identify PSP local and regional funding opportunities and develop proposals. Build on synergies with public funding proposals.	PSP	Short term
7.3 Build project task forces , pool expertise and ideas to address key issues and design most effective engagement plans with the various stakeholders.	Senior management team, PSP	Short term
7.4 Reinforce strategic planning skills for better and shared identification of priorities. Host internal knowledge-sharing workshops to upskill existing staff, and build capacity in donor engagement, strategic planning, and advocacy.	Senior management team, PSP	Medium term

Recommendation – R8) ORGANISATIONAL MODEL - To gain in agility and networking capacity, and explore efficiency gains, assess the possibility to create a National Partner Association in the Republic of Korea		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
8.1 Compare the advantages and disadvantages of the National Association Partner model in other countries (benchmarking) and consider its potential suitability for Korea.	CO Representative, PSP, RBAP	Medium term
8.2 Analyse the existing conditions in the Republic of Korea and the feasibility of establishing a National Partner Association.	Senior management team, RBAP	Medium term
8.3 Consult with partners, civil society organisations, and academic institutions to assess their capacity and willingness to participate in alternative models of partnership with UNHCR.	Senior management team, RBAP	Medium term

Recommendation – R9) ASYLUM SYSTEM - Continue strengthening the national asylum system and improving refugee protection by complementing advocacy with broader stakeholder engagement and targeted capacity-building efforts.		
Actions	Responsible entity	Timeline
9.1 Support targeted advocacy through engagement with progressive legislators and aligned ministries by sharing curated data, positive case studies, and international best practices to inform legal reform debates.	CO Representative, Protection	Short term
9.2 Increase intentional learning from NGOs¹⁷¹ that support both domestic and global activities to better incorporate and highlight operations and resource mobilisation in UNHCR Korea’s work.	Protection, RBAP	Medium term
9.3 Invite regional UNHCR training facilitators to Korea to foster direct engagement and broaden participation from CSO members.	Protection, RBAP	Medium term
9.4 Launch light-touch quality assurance initiatives , such as periodic, randomised reviews of RSD decisions and asylum procedures to identify issues and support reform efforts with evidence.	Protection	Medium term

¹⁷¹ Such as World Vision, Good Neighbours, Save the Children and Child Fund Korea.

APPENDICES

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