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**Global Programmes***Summary*

This paper provides an overview of developments in the global programmes of UNHCR since the last update to the ninety second meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2025 (EC/76/SC/CRP.3). It focuses on interventions and implementation in the following key areas: (a) education; (b) cash-based interventions; (c) public health, including mental health and psychosocial support; (d) nutrition and food security; (e) energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, and water, sanitation and hygiene; (g) global shelter cluster; and (h) the global camp coordination and camp management cluster. Self-reliance and inclusion, together with development partnerships, are covered separately in the Conference Room Paper on sustainable responses to be presented at the June Standing Committee.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In 2025, UNHCR's global programmes addressed the needs of millions of forcibly displaced people amid ongoing and newly emerging conflicts, political instability, and human rights abuses. These programmes focused on: (a) education (b) cash-based assistance; (c) public health, including mental health and psychosocial support; (d) nutrition and food security; (e) energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene. UNHCR also continued to co-lead both the global shelter cluster and the global camp coordination and camp management cluster.

## **II. Updates on technical sectors**

### **A. Education**

2. Marking the midpoint of implementation of UNHCR's Refugee Education 2030 strategy, the 2025 UNHCR Refugee Education Report drew on data from more than 70 countries worldwide to provide an overview of the state of refugee education and enrolment globally. UNHCR reported slight increases in access to education for refugees as well as moderate improvements towards achieving gender parity. Data and evidence continued to improve, with new studies undertaken in Mexico and Mauritania, findings from which are informing the process of integrating refugee students into the national education systems.

3. Partnerships continue to be critical to UNHCR's work on education. Building on the partnership with Education Above All established in 2012, which has supported enrolment for more than 1.6 million refugee learners across 14 countries, UNHCR renewed the collaboration in 2025 to reach a further 200,000 out-of-school children in Chad, Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic by 2028. To expand primary access, UNHCR continued mobilizing resources through the Primary Impact Initiative, targeting more than 500,000 additional children by 2027. Support for secondary education, delivered in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, reached over 106,500 forcibly displaced and host community adolescents across eight African countries, with plans to scale up to additional locations.

4. At the tertiary level, progress continued toward the 15-by-30 target, the UNHCR-led global pledge that 15 per cent of refugee youth will have access to the transformative power of higher education by 2030. In 2025, the average refugee gross enrolment rate rose to 9 per cent, up from 7 per cent the previous year. This was driven by greater inclusion in national higher education systems, expanded digital modalities, technical and vocational education and training pathways, and targeted scholarships. The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative, often referred to by the acronym DAFI, supported more than 5,750 students in 58 countries, with demonstrated positive effects on secondary retention, especially for girls. Additional support was sustained through partner engagement, supported by partners such as the Mastercard Foundation, and funding raised through the Aiming Higher campaign.

5. Connected education initiatives helped address constraints linked to teacher shortages, learning continuity, and limited infrastructure. The Instant Network Schools programme, implemented in partnership with the Vodafone Foundation, continued operations across 164 digital learning centres (including 34 newly launched in 2025) in six countries. Since March 2025, the programme has reached an additional 15,123 students and over 110 teachers. The ProFuturo programme supported 23,000 children and 800 teachers across 325 classrooms in Nigeria, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. The Akelius Language Learning programme was rolled out in Egypt, Mozambique, and South Sudan, supporting second-language acquisition and foundational learning outcomes for 2,669 students.

6. Progress was made on the education multi-stakeholder Global Refugee Forum pledges focused on predictable, multi-year financing for refugee inclusion. The United Kingdom

increased support through the INSPIRE<sup>1</sup> with an additional £2.5 million, enabling new country grants and the development of global guidance on refugee inclusion. By December 2025, INSPIRE had already influenced an additional \$440 million in broader education programmes.

7. UNHCR strengthened education in emergencies, prioritizing early inclusion in national education systems and continuity of learning for forcibly displaced children. In 2025, the arrival of an additional 180,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad placed acute pressure on the already overstretched education system, where nearly two-thirds of refugee school-aged children were out of school. With support from Education Cannot Wait, UNHCR reached 27,000 additional children, bringing the total to some 97,000 children in Chad, with inclusive, quality learning, mental health and psychosocial support, and stronger community-based structures. In Burundi, more than 5,000 newly arrived Congolese children received foundational language support, enabling early entry into the national system. In the Central African Republic, Sudanese refugees participated in national examinations for the first time, achieving a 60 per cent pass rate, 100 per cent for girls. Despite these achievements, significant gaps persist. In refugee settings in Uganda, for example, major funding cuts worsened the pupil–teacher ratio from 1:77 (2024) to 1:117 (2025), more than double the national standard of 1:53.

## **B. Cash-based interventions**

8. In 2025, UNHCR provided around \$450 million in cash assistance to over 4 million people across 100 countries, 53 per cent of whom were women. Some 95 per cent of the cash assistance was unrestricted, in line with the cash-based interventions policy. Major operations included Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Moldova, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. Countries where there were declared emergencies distributed cash to meet their critical needs, including Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan. UNHCR also supported returnees in 15 countries with a total of \$56 million in cash assistance - mainly Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic - lowering logistics costs and boosting local markets. Post distribution monitoring in 50 countries shows 95 per cent of recipients were satisfied, and 91 per cent preferred cash over other forms of assistance.

9. UNHCR's cash management system, *CashAssist*, ensured strong financial accountability, managing 96 per cent of cash assistance across 74 countries - a 26 per cent increase from 2024. UNHCR maintained 78 financial service provider contracts and delivered \$28 million via blockchain technologies, including a new system in Afghanistan reaching about 500,000 refugees and returnees. UNHCR issued guidance promoting women as primary cash recipients and, with WFP, launched the responsible cash toolkit featuring over 200 tools to support women's empowerment, protection, and digital financial inclusion.

10. UNHCR implemented common cash arrangements with partners in 31 countries, ensuring recipients used one transfer mechanism. UNHCR and OCHA co-chair the Global Cash Advisory Group to enhance the effectiveness of cash coordination. Some 64 per cent of cash working groups in refugee settings are co-led by local or national actors in order to enhance local capacity.

11. Cash remains a core protection tool and helps expand access to national services and advances financial inclusion. UNHCR continues to expand the use of cash to meet urgent needs during new displacement emergencies and to support returns.

## **C. Public health, including mental health and psychosocial support**

12. UNHCR continued to prioritize the delivery of essential public health services across operations, with a focus on maintaining continuity of life-saving care despite increasingly complex operating environments. Preliminary data from 22 refugee-hosting countries

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<sup>1</sup> A World Bank technical assistance facility designed to leverage International Development Association financing to advance refugee inclusion in national systems.

indicate 7.5 million outpatient consultations in 2025. Skilled birth attendance remained stable at 94 per cent, with more than 100,000 deliveries assisted by qualified health personnel across reporting sites. Continuity of sexual and reproductive health and HIV services was maintained through inter-agency task team coordination and sustained advocacy.

13. At the same time, under-financing continued to significantly shape operational realities. UNHCR-supported health programmes were reduced by 35 per cent, limiting access to essential services and increasing risks of untreated illness and preventable deaths. Refugee outpatient consultations declined by 14 per cent compared to 2024, reflecting funding shortfalls and reduced staffing capacity.

14. UNHCR and national partners responded to multiple disease outbreaks across refugee-hosting countries, including recurrent cholera outbreaks in Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and the Sudan, as well as measles outbreaks in Uganda. In the Sudan, fragile infrastructure, limited humanitarian access and insecurity constrained the timely delivery of life-saving health services.

15. UNHCR continued supporting host countries to strengthen national health systems and expand equitable access to services for refugees and host communities. Joint research with Queen Margaret University reinforced evidence on what enables refugee inclusion, with six case studies highlighting the importance of integrated governance, financing, service delivery, workforce and health information systems, and the need for strong legal frameworks and inclusive policies.

16. In parallel, UNHCR strengthened global advocacy on non-communicable diseases in humanitarian settings, including through engagement in high-level events at the World Health Assembly and the United Nations General Assembly. Building on sustained multi-year advocacy with Member States and partners, UNHCR helped advance the inclusion of refugees in national non-communicable disease policies as well. In Rwanda, for example, UNHCR's advocacy supported the Government's decision to include refugees in the national community-based health insurance scheme, enabling equitable access to essential and specialized non-communicable disease health services, at the same subsidized rates as nationals.

17. In two stocktaking events co-convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNHCR, the Group of Friends of Health for Refugees and Host Communities shared experiences implementing multistakeholder pledges on health system inclusion and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. Subsequently, progress was reported in access to health services in 12 of 15 countries at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review meeting in December 2025.

18. UNHCR advanced key global public health guidance, including the revision of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance on HIV in humanitarian settings and co-authoring *Malaria Control in Emergencies*, with updated guidance expected in 2026. Following consultations with Member States and partners, a draft UNHCR global public health strategy has been developed and is scheduled for finalization in 2026.

## **D. Nutrition and food security**

19. Through its partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the WHO under the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting, UNHCR plays a pivotal role in ensuring the inclusion of refugees and other people under the mandate of UNHCR in global and national policies, plans and activities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of prevention and treatment of maternal and child malnutrition. UNHCR's contributions to the Joint Action Plan to Stop Wasting (2024–2026) resulted in increased refugee inclusion in national child-wasting plans, with 13 refugee operations reflected in advocacy and monitoring outputs. From January to December 2025, more than 236,000 refugee children and women in 22 countries received treatment for acute malnutrition,

20. UNHCR also advocated for refugee inclusion in global and national nutrition frameworks through inputs to the Scaling Up Nutrition Strategy 3.0 evaluation and review of its 2026–2030 framework, supporting alignment of refugee nutrition priorities within national planning and financing discussions

21. In addition, UNHCR ensured the inclusion of refugee nutrition and food security data in the [2025 Global Report on Food Crises](#), improving the visibility of refugee needs in global analysis. The report documented acute food insecurity across 53 countries, driven by the compounded effects of conflict, climate shocks and economic pressures. Population movements, both new displacements and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, were a central feature of these crises and significantly shaped food insecurity outcomes. Disaggregated data from 13 crisis-affected countries show higher acute food insecurity among displaced people and returnees than among non-displaced populations, driven by disrupted livelihoods, reduced access to land and markets, and limited resources upon return.

## **E. Energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, and water, sanitation and hygiene**

22. In 2025, UNHCR and partners advanced sustainable human settlements for displaced people and host communities. The technical deep dive with UN-Habitat and the World Bank identified integrated planning, municipal leadership and innovative financing needs in six countries, namely Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique and Somalia. These findings informed the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review and boosted momentum behind the Sustainable Human Settlements Multistakeholder Pledge, now comprising 53 commitments, including 16 from host countries and private sector partners such as the Grundfos and Veolia Foundations.

23. During the Progress Review, eight host countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda), including five that are part of the Human Settlements Pledge, reported progress in transitioning from temporary camps to inclusive climate resilient settlements, integrated into national systems, benefiting 11.5 million displaced people.

24. Development financing and policy reforms linked to the pledge are already improving housing, services and inclusive development for over 13.1 million people, across the 14 refugee hosting countries that are part of the pledge.

25. In 2025, UNHCR targeted shelter assistance for more than 2.2 million people affected by conflict and disasters. Support included more than \$16 million in cash-based assistance across countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. A six-month field test of a redesigned, more ecofriendly and lighter family tent began in Ethiopia and the Syrian Arab Republic to make responses more sustainable and cost-efficient. UNHCR also partnered with WFP and UNICEF to promote circular economic practices in humanitarian construction, maximizing resource reuse and reducing costs.

26. UNHCR collaborated with Deltares to implement flood risk mitigation strategies in affected settlements in Ethiopia and South Sudan. The Geneva Technical Hub completed phase one by issuing technical guidance on flood mitigation and resilient shelter and sharing them in the field. The Geneva Technical Hub now moves into its second phase, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, with expert deployments from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, commonly known as MSB, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the Veolia Foundation. UNHCR, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Global Platform for Action, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the global WASH cluster, the International Committee of the Red Cross and UN-Habitat will benefit from technical expertise on settlement planning, water, energy and other areas, with a strong focus on localisation and knowledge management.

27. Solar implementation under Project Flow progressed across 21 water systems and four health facilities serving 1.2 million people in Ethiopia, Mauritania, Rwanda and the Sudan, the latter completing installations in 2025. Each dollar invested is generating annual savings of \$0.30, while reducing fossil-fuel dependence and strengthening climate resilience.

28. The Refugee Environmental Protection Fund reached a major milestone with the launch of the first large-scale refugee-led carbon-finance projects at COP30. In Rwanda and Uganda, the projects will restore at least 7,000 hectares through reforestation and agroforestry, provide cleaner cooking solutions to about 90,000 refugee and host households, and generate an estimated \$95 million in carbon revenue. Feasibility work in Bangladesh and Brazil was completed, and 17 more host countries have expressed interest, positioning the Fund for scalable private climate finance mobilization in displacement settings.

## **F. Global shelter cluster**

29. In 2025, the global shelter cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IFRC, supported shelter coordination in 37 countries with shelter and non-food item assistance. Efforts continued to harmonize global reporting and assess response effectiveness across contexts such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan and Ukraine. Central to this work is the Shelter Severity Classification, used to assess needs, track funding gaps and align coordination indicators, strengthening consistency and comparability in global shelter reporting. The cluster's operations also integrate environmental, protection and disaster risk reduction considerations into shelter planning and response.

30. The cluster continued to strengthen its strategic and operational architecture, including through dedicated working groups to advance technical thematic areas such as inclusion, settlements approaches, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, extreme heat, and housing, land and property guidance. In 2025, the cluster also celebrated 20 years of coordinated humanitarian shelter action. In its global coordination role, the shelter cluster promotes cash and market-based assistance, settlement approaches and performance monitoring, while providing technical and remote support to country clusters. Training of shelter cluster partners, including national and sub-national coordination teams, strengthened evidence-based planning. This capacity-building effort supports integrated, context-sensitive shelter responses and enhances preparedness for disaster-induced displacement.

## **G. Global camp coordination and camp management cluster**

31. Throughout 2025, the cluster coordinated multi-sectoral assistance for more than 15 million internally displaced people across 27 countries. Working through both site management and area-based approaches, UNHCR, IOM and partners ensured access to life-saving services, including shelter, WASH, health and protection. The cluster brought together a broad network of 187 local partners, 60 non-governmental organizations, 15 government entities and multiple United Nations agencies, enabling rapid needs identification, prioritization and more efficient resource allocation in complex and fast-moving emergencies.

32. In operations such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, the Sudan, and Ukraine, the cluster teams strengthened community participation, reduced protection risks and improved living conditions through mobile support and targeted capacity-building. This participatory approach ensures displaced communities actively contribute to decisions affecting their safety and dignity. At the global level, the cluster advanced its 2025–2029 strategy, promoting alternatives to camps, area-based responses, localization and pathways toward durable solutions.

33. Under the Humanitarian Reset cluster simplification workstream, UNHCR is now actively engaging in the global shelter, land and site coordination cluster, and continues to lead at country-level where relevant.