
**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

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Strategic partnerships, including coordination*Summary*

This paper provides an update on key developments in strategic partnerships since the last report to the ninety-second meeting of the Standing Committee held in March 2025 (EC/75/SC/CRP.6). It provides examples of diverse and strategic partnerships with development actors, international organizations and sport organizations. It also highlights advancements in localization and the Office's work in the context of the reform of the United Nations humanitarian and development system.

I. Introduction

1. UNHCR has continued to diversify its partnerships and strengthen collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Its work is guided by the following tenets: placing affected populations at the centre of the response; upholding protection principles; championing localization; assisting governments to coordinate the international response to forced displacement and statelessness; promoting refugee protection and inclusion through sport and promoting the inclusion of affected populations in development responses.

II. Strategic partnerships

A. Inter-agency coordination: the Humanitarian Reset, UN80 Initiative and the UN Common Pledge 2.0

2. UNHCR supports the Humanitarian Reset led by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to deliver faster, fairer and locally-led humanitarian action. The Office has continued to advance protection-focused and collaborative humanitarian responses across its leadership, coordination and operational responsibilities. Building on the High Commissioner's strategic directions 2022-2026 and the commitments related to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, UNHCR has undertaken a number of measures to align with and operationalize the Humanitarian Reset. The Office continues to implement priorities such as cluster streamlining, simplification of planning processes and humanitarian situation appeals, scaling multipurpose cash assistance, advancing localization, and streamlining coordination in mixed settings with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

3. To address internal displacement, UNHCR, together with the United Nations Development Programme and the International Organization for Migration, continues to serve as a United Nations Solutions Champion for internal displacement and advances protection leadership, national system-building, and socioeconomic inclusion to enable sustainable returns and local integration. In 2025, joint support to the United Nations country teams was increased through high-level missions and strengthened engagement with Resident Coordinators, generating a system-wide momentum to shift from reactive humanitarian cycles to lasting solutions for internally displaced persons.

4. In the context of the IASC cluster simplification process, UNHCR has played a central role in shaping the protection architecture within the Humanitarian Reset. As the lead agency of the global protection cluster, the Office has supported the integration of child protection, gender-based violence and mine action into a streamlined protection cluster. The consolidation of these areas of responsibility aims to deliver a single, coherent protection voice, reduce duplication, and ensure that participation of local actors and specialized services remain core components of the cluster. To reinforce the implementation of the areas of responsibility at the country level, UNHCR has issued operational guidance and worked with protection partners to ensure that the roll out is consistent with the Reset principles, emphasizing simplified, protection-centred coordination.

5. UNHCR has also remained closely engaged in the transition of leadership of the shelter and the camp coordination and camp management clusters to the newly integrated shelter, land and site coordination cluster. While global leadership of the cluster has shifted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Organization for Migration from January 2026, UNHCR continues to lead or co-lead the cluster in 17 out of 36 countries, in order to support operational continuity and reinforce national coordination structures.

6. In mixed refugee and internal displacement settings, UNHCR and OCHA have jointly advanced streamlined coordination models in 16 countries, reducing duplication while safeguarding the accountability of UNHCR for refugee protection and assistance. A joint

memorandum will be prepared outlining the working arrangements between the two organizations across operations.

7. UNHCR remains committed to championing localization as a system-wide shift of power, leadership, and resources to local and national actors, which is a central pillar of the Humanitarian Reset. The Office continues to strengthen meaningful participation, leadership, and equitable partnerships, particularly of refugee-led and women-led organizations, and to support the Humanitarian Coordinators and their country teams to deliver against localization benchmarks embedded in the Reset and the New Humanitarian Compact.

8. UNHCR continues to advocate for simplification of planning and reporting mechanisms that support humanitarian action, while safeguarding protection and ensuring an accurate reflection of needs. In this regard, UNHCR has supported the work of OCHA to simplify humanitarian planning, appeals and reporting. Key contributions include advocating for the use of streamlined templates and tools that uphold the centrality of protection, ensuring accurate reflection of needs on the ground and strengthening credibility and transparency.

9. UNHCR has remained engaged in the preparation of the 2026 Global Humanitarian Overview, leading or co-leading refugee-related plans, including the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis in Bangladesh, the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan, the Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in response to the Syria situation and the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan in the Americas region which together account for 20 per cent of the total global humanitarian overview requirements and 21 per cent of the hyper-prioritized requirements. In addition, UNHCR contributed to the development of 19 humanitarian needs and response plans to ensure a shared, evidence-based approach to a coordinated humanitarian response at the country level. Furthermore, UNHCR contributes through cluster-based coordination and response mechanisms to address internal displacement and leads 15 dedicated refugee chapters. Through its engagement in inter-agency platforms and leadership in planning refugee chapters, UNHCR continues to contribute to improved coherence, comparability and prioritization as per the Humanitarian Reset.

10. The UN80 Initiative is closely linked to the Humanitarian Reset, with the Secretary-General's New Humanitarian Compact designed to complement ongoing reform efforts. The initiative aims to advance system-wide changes to improve coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness in humanitarian action, ultimately strengthening delivery at country level and supporting the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators.

11. UNHCR engages in the UN80 process through its participation in the Steering Committee and various workstreams, in particular those related to the New Humanitarian Compact. The organization has already implemented major cost-saving measures by centralizing its support services and advancing digital transformation, independent of the UN80 process.

12. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the needs of refugees and forcibly displaced people to feature prominently in the UN80 outcomes, including within the Resident Coordinators-led discussions for long-term development. To enhance system-wide synergies, shared services, new operational models and co-location with United Nations partners will be explored at all levels.

13. UNHCR has served as a key driver of the Humanitarian Reset and a principal contributor to the New Humanitarian Compact and will continue to prioritize support for the broader United Nations ambition to deliver more timely, equitable and accountable humanitarian action.

14. UNHCR, the United Nations Development Coordination Office and OCHA have been co-leading the United Nations Common Pledge 2.0 since 2023. The pledge is a commitment by 50 United Nations country teams and 20 United Nations entities to advance refugee inclusion in national systems as well as the integration of refugees in all United Nations

analysis, policies and plans. A stocktaking report on the pledge was published in 2025, presenting documented examples of its impact across countries. An event during the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025 shared the impact of the pledge with the broader audience. The co-leads will continue their joint coordination and support for the next Global Refugee Forum in 2027 during the four-year implementation period (2023 to 2026).

15. UNHCR and the United Nations Children’s Fund have continued to strengthen their partnership under the strategic collaboration framework, a global agreement to promote the inclusion of refugee children and their families in national plans, budgets, datasets, and service delivery systems. UNHCR and the World Food Programme have continued their cooperation in the provision of food assistance, related non-food items and cash assistance to food-insecure refugees and other persons of concern. Through the joint programme excellence and targeting hub, UNHCR and the World Food Programme have reinforced their collaboration, resulting in better targeting, stronger assessments, and improved programme quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Ongoing joint work will focus on cash coordination and delivery, inter-operability of data systems and efforts to advance inclusive social protection.

16. In 2025, UNHCR continued to support the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, which builds on the legacy of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness. The Alliance is made up of 185 members, including 28 States, and 12 regional bodies, United Nations entities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. It provides a platform for coordinated advocacy, peer exchange and sharing of good practices to advance concrete measures to prevent and reduce statelessness. In 2025, the Alliance continued to promote high-level engagement, supported reforms to strengthen nationality laws and actions to reduce and prevent statelessness, and to amplify the perspectives of stateless persons and those with lived experience. These efforts contributed to sustaining political commitment and visibility for upholding the fundamental human right to a nationality.

B. Engagement with non-governmental organizations and civil society

17. Non-governmental and civil society organizations remain strategic partners for UNHCR in advancing protection, solutions, policy development and advocacy at the local, regional and global levels, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and the Grand Bargain commitments on localization.

18. In 2025, UNHCR continued to strengthen engagement with local and national actors, including organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. As of December 2025, 87 per cent of the partners that receive funds from UNHCR are local or national partners. These local partners receive some 59 per cent of UNHCR’s overall partner funding allocation. Twenty-four per cent of local and national partners identified themselves as refugee community organizations, and 20 per cent of all UNHCR-funded partners were women-led organizations, the majority of which were local or national. Through simplified grant agreements, 229 grants amounting to \$1.9 million were active across 39 operations, supporting community-based initiatives and reinforcing local leadership.

19. In October 2025, the UNHCR-issued guidelines on localization, established a standard approach to operationalize localization across headquarters, regional bureaux and country operations. The guidelines were developed in consultation with partners, including the International Council of Voluntary Agencies and the Advisory Board to the UNHCR Task Team on Engagement with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons, and are aligned with existing policies and the Refugee Coordination Model.

20. Through the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund, UNHCR continued to provide multi-year financial and technical support to organizations led by displaced and stateless persons. In 2025, UNHCR supported 21 initiatives with a total of \$230,000 in direct funding.

21. Non-governmental and civil society organizations continued to play a central role in advancing the Global Compact on Refugees. The 2025 Global Refugee Forum Progress Review included 260 in-person participants with lived experience of displacement and statelessness, including representatives of 58 organizations led by forcibly displaced and

stateless persons. The Advisory Board actively contributed to preparations, including through a global refugee statement and dedicated sessions on meaningful participation.

22. UNHCR further strengthened its structured engagement mechanisms at global, regional and country levels. The inter-divisional task team on engagement and partnership with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons continued its work, supported by the first global Advisory Board (2022-2025), with a second cohort being established for 2026-2028. UNHCR also maintained global and thematic advisory groups and continued to recognize local leadership through initiatives such as the Nansen Refugee Award.

C. Engagement with sport organizations

23. In 2025, UNHCR continued to expand its engagement in sport, working closely with both internal and external stakeholders. The roll-out of the sport strategy progressed with the participation of more UNHCR operations. The sport for protection projects continued to be implemented in 15 country locations, through sport partnerships with FIFA Legacy Fund, LIV Golf, Adidas Foundation and FC Barcelona Foundation. Educational and professional skills development through sport was promoted through the partnership with the FIFA Foundation with three community coach training programmes delivered in Armenia, Morocco and Poland and football for protection projects planned in two locations in 2026.

24. In partnership with the Sport Foundation, the Olympic Refugee Foundation and the International Olympic Committee, UNHCR co-convened the Sport for Refugees Coalition in support of the multi-stakeholder pledge on sport for refugee inclusion and protection, announced at the second Global Refugee Forum. Since then, more than 529,000 displaced persons have accessed sport and play-based programmes in over 92 countries through the coalition's collective efforts. Over 11,000 coaches have been trained to deliver safe and inclusive sports activities, with over 160 sport spaces created or refurbished to improve access to safe sport. During the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025, the contribution of sport to the Global Compact on Refugees was highlighted, accompanied by new pledge announcements made by LIV Golf, World Athletics and Special Olympics as well as a statement delivered on behalf of the coalition by Masomah Ali Zada, Olympian and Chef de Mission of the 2024 Refugee Olympic Team.

25. UNHCR continued to leverage major sporting events to promote solidarity with refugees. In partnership with the FIFA Foundation, young refugees and host community members in Chile served as flag bearers during matches at the U20 Men's World Cup. Campaigns promoting positive narratives were undertaken in stadiums, through local media and on social media. UNHCR also supported the FIFA Afghan Women's United Team in competing internationally for the first time. Together with the Union of European Football Associations, UNHCR promoted football as a tool for inclusion at the annual Unity Euro Cup, hosted by the Dutch Football Federation and involving 18 mixed teams of refugees and host community players — the largest participation since its initiation in 2022.

26. UNHCR also contributed to strengthening the knowledge base on the role of sport in refugee protection and inclusion. Through the Beyond Fulltime research project with Ipsos (*Institut Public de Sondage d'Opinion Secteur*), the potential of how football fans can become advocates for refugees and help change the public narrative around displacement was examined. UNHCR also contributed to the policy advocacy in sport and society project, which helps sport organizations engage with policymakers to create more inclusive environments for vulnerable communities including refugees. In addition, UNHCR collaborated with the Regional Academy on the United Nations on a project that mapped barriers and opportunities to refugee participation in elite sport and sport-related livelihoods.