



Transformative Initiatives

© UNHCR/Sanne Blesmans

A young Burundian refugee washes her hands at a transit centre in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, before her and her family's voluntary repatriation.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic tested the ability of UNHCR and partners to protect and assist people of concern in ways never before seen in its 70-year history, highlighting the importance of strategic collaboration, responsibility sharing, and the inclusion of forcibly displaced people in national responses.

The pandemic preyed on the vulnerabilities of forcibly displaced women, men, girls and boys. It blocked access to territory, jeopardized livelihoods and endangered

the lives of those without equitable access to health care. UNHCR adapted to stay and deliver, an achievement made possible by the dedication of its staff, particularly those in field locations, as well as by its emergency response capacity, its pre-pandemic investments in forging strong protection partnerships with communities, its partnerships, and, most importantly, the strength and resilience of displaced communities themselves.

The pandemic forced tough decisions about reallocating funds towards the most urgent needs, such as life-sustaining

support through health, WASH and protection services, ramped-up cash assistance and increased shelter capacity, among others. Unearmarked funds, the Operational Reserve, and operations' reprioritizing of their budgets were vital elements in kickstarting the response before fresh contributions were received against UNHCR's \$745 million appeal, which was ultimately 66% funded with \$492 million in contributions.

From the beginning, UNHCR's response had to deal with myriad challenges. Many people of concern were in areas where health systems were already struggling, capacity for COVID-19 testing, isolation and treatment was limited, and tracing and quarantining difficult. UNHCR urged governments to include refugees, the internally displaced and stateless in their pandemic responses and supported national health systems to increase capacity. It adapted programmes to ensure continuity in reproductive health and HIV services, chronic diseases and mental health. UNHCR constructed or rehabilitated isolation and treatment facilities for local hospitals, built governments' and partners' capacity for surveillance, contact tracing and case management, and supplied personal protective equipment (PPE), medicines, oxygen and rapid testing kits. Despite global shortages and the near-collapse of global transport links, UNHCR procured \$186.1 million of critical COVID-19 supplies, PPE and services, and 9.9 million people of concern received essential health care.

Crowded living conditions and inadequate WASH services amplified the pandemic's impact. UNHCR supported over 100 health care facilities and 95 schools with additional WASH facilities and distributed 50 million bars of soap, as well as hand sanitizer and disinfectant, to over 60 operations. Thousands of handwashing facilities were installed in public spaces, schools, health facilities and private accommodation.

The pandemic exacerbated protection concerns, with 80% of operations

reporting escalating conflict and violence, and pandemic-related restrictions affecting IDPs' ability to seek safety or return home, access health services and maintain their livelihoods. Through the Global Protection Cluster, UNHCR issued guidance to all field clusters and, with ICRC, issued common COVID-19 protection messages to all operations for joint demarches with States. UNHCR stepped up its response in the 33 countries where it engaged in situations of internal displacement. In Burkina Faso, Colombia and Sudan, UNHCR supported health authorities and ensured IDPs had access to health care; in Somalia, it reinforced COVID-19 awareness raising and ensured two-way communication; and in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Ukraine, cash and livelihoods were vital in, for example, addressing the risk of evictions.

As the pandemic progressed, UNHCR increasingly invested in 24/7 protection helplines, local language call centres, and other remote delivery mechanisms. These kept communities informed about COVID-19, maintained two-way communication on gender-based violence and mental health, and allowed socially distant protection case management. About 85% of operations innovated to provide services and assistance remotely, such as delivering high-risk pregnancy telemedicine in Jordan and contactless cash in Ecuador.

Gender-based violence increased dramatically and restrictions on movement often made it impossible for those in need to seek help, especially for those already forcibly displaced. In Afghanistan, for example, 97% of forcibly displaced women interviewed for an assessment reported an increase in intimate partner violence, as did 69% in Jordan and an average of 73% in a multi-country assessment in 15 countries across Africa. Calls to gender-based

violence hotlines rose 70% in Zimbabwe, 153% in Colombia, and 239% in eastern Ukraine. Together with partners and forcibly displaced women and girls themselves, UNHCR adapted programming, updated online guidance and tools, and expanded community mechanisms, ultimately assisting 2 million women and girls through dedicated 24/7 helplines.

For those already dealing with the stress of being uprooted, the pandemic created an added psychological burden and increased protection risks, often disrupting care for those with existing mental health conditions. UNHCR and its partners provided mental health and psychosocial support in 75 countries, reaching more than 647,000 people.

Displaced people's living conditions often precluded or hindered physical distancing. Overcrowding and evictions were major risks. UNHCR piloted innovative shelter approaches, as in Bangladesh, where adding mezzanines to shelters gave families nearly 70% more space without using more land. Globally, UNHCR provided almost 150,000 emergency shelters, 58% more than in 2019, installed 268 isolation and quarantine areas and decongested overcrowded conditions by providing shelter-related relief items to over 362,000 people, helping to create additional space to those modifying their homes.

With schools forced to close, 934,000 students in 74 countries were assisted to continue learning from home through radio, television and internet-based programmes. UNHCR worked with governments to enhance national educational content platforms, drawing on investments in connected education. It distributed books and supplies, supported refugee-led initiatives and helped pay refugee teachers. UNHCR's global advocacy ensured refugees' needs were included in national and global efforts to address losses in learning,

particularly where they were not addressed by humanitarian or development financing. The Office supported safe school reopening, ensuring schools had WASH and handwashing facilities and supplying catch-up resources for learners.

Cash assistance was scaled up to address immediate needs and mitigate the longer-term socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, and more than 65 UNHCR operations launched or expanded cash assistance programmes, disbursing \$695 million to 8.57 million people.

The pandemic underlined the need to strengthen the transition from immediate to long-term responses to ensure protection and solutions for people of concern, and it increased awareness of the importance of including forcibly displaced people in national services such as WASH, health and vaccine programmes, and in data collection. Noting that "what gets counted, counts", UNHCR made significant efforts to ensure socioeconomic assessments of COVID-19 took people of concern into account. Microdata in Bangladesh, Kenya, Lebanon and Nigeria provided insight into how COVID-19 affects people of concern and, in some cases, host communities. In nearly all contexts, job losses were significant, leading to reduced food consumption and increased poverty and the incidence of child labour, while families found it harder to obtain health care.

UNHCR engaged with development actors to encourage inclusion in financing, programmes and social protection policies, including through its close partnership with the World Bank Group which took important measures to systematically include refugees and others of concern in its COVID-19 response efforts in low- and middle-income countries. Its COVID-19 socioeconomic surveys carried out in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco and Uganda included a

refugee sample, with Kenya also including one on statelessness. Early findings of many surveys are striking, highlighting for example the refugee and host community poverty gap in Kenya. Overall, in 47 out of the 52 operations in countries hosting more than 10,000 refugees, UNHCR ensured people of concern were included in UN country teams' socioeconomic response plans.

Partnerships were crucial to UNHCR's ability to stay and deliver, adapt programmes and ensure protection and life-saving assistance. UNHCR rapidly issued new guidelines to implementing partners in April 2020 with greater flexibility to make discretionary budget allocations and reduced reporting requirements. Regional refugee response plans were revised with partners. Weekly consultations with NGO partners, co-organized with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), created a space to harmonize approaches to COVID-19. Annual consultations with over 100 NGOs, including local partners

and refugee-led organizations, focused on protection challenges raised by the pandemic. UNHCR encouraged localization through a specific fund set up to target small civil society actors and launched an innovation award for refugee led organizations responding to the pandemic. The annual UNHCR NGO Innovation Award was dedicated to refugee-led organizations and their response to COVID-19, with seven organizations in each region acknowledged for their dedication, innovation and creativity.

The Office increased collaboration with WHO and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to enhance inclusion of people of concern in national health responses and vaccination campaigns, and with IFRC to strengthen localization efforts at country level. A specific strategic objective to ensure the rights and assistance needs of refugees, migrants, stateless and the internally displaced was also included in the IASC-led [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#).

© UNHCR/Abbas Zuhri



SPOTLIGHT: Community response to COVID-19

From the very start of the pandemic, faced with lockdowns and movement restrictions, communities themselves made extraordinary efforts to protect themselves and others. Community and religious leaders,

outreach volunteers and women's and youth groups all engaged to ensure culturally appropriate and understandable information reached people of concern through multiple channels. These included social media, going door-to-door, radio, bicycling to isolated communities, or using megaphones and loudspeakers to ensure all members of the community were contacted with accurate information.

Displaced women around the world led in protecting their communities, for example in Zambia where hygiene promoters and community health workers were trained on safe disclosure and referrals for gender-based violence, as well as psychological first aid. In Pakistan, female outreach volunteers, community mobilizers and gender support groups enhanced outreach and communication on COVID-19 preventive measures, including addressing social stigma and psychosocial support.

COVID-19 triggered UNHCR's first-ever declaration of a global Level 2 emergency on 25 March 2020, prompting additional frame agreements with suppliers to allow more flexibility in procurement and deliveries, and UNHCR's active participation in the UN COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force to streamline and expedite joint procurement of pandemic-related items. Strengthened regional leadership structures were key to the quality and speed of the COVID-19 response, helping UNHCR to stay and deliver by providing timely support to country offices, accessing regional or local pooled funding mechanisms, and speeding up decision-making. Regional bureaux supported procurement efforts, spearheaded measures to ensure health care services for frontline staff, and were

instrumental in sharing good practices across country operations.

In summary, COVID-19 triggered an immediate worldwide reflex. UNHCR raced to prevent its most vital protection and assistance from being disrupted or interrupted. It reallocated resources and found new ways of working, pressed governments to include refugees in their health responses, and strove to prevent the pandemic from exacerbating the plight of refugees—in terms of hunger, poverty, family separation, education, discrimination and violence, as well as health. The pandemic engendered new partnerships and creativity, but it tested UNHCR's ability to respond in a crisis, with already stretched funding and record numbers of forcibly displaced people.



Private donors' support to COVID-19 emergency appeal

Private donors responded generously with \$52 million for UNHCR's COVID-19 appeal, making it the emergency appeal best-funded by the private sector in UNHCR's history. Over 84% of the income came from companies, foundations and philanthropists, with the remainder from individual donors contributing mainly through digital channels. In addition to financial and in-kind donations, many private sector partners such as Microsoft and H&M supported UNHCR by raising awareness among their stakeholders and amplifying communications and content about refugees through their platforms.



UN Foundation and UNHCR reimagine shared global problems to ensure no one is left behind

UN Foundation (UNF) was critical in securing \$10 million of flexible funding from WHO's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund to ensure those under UNHCR's care in vulnerable communities were afforded immediate support as part of the global health response. This funding helped UNHCR to ensure populations of concern were included in national health systems and to mitigate some of the effects of the pandemic on vulnerable communities. With less than a decade of action left to achieve the 2030 SDGs, UNHCR's partnership with UNF represents the kind of collaboration and impact needed to transform the UN's approach to shared global problems.

Sony steps up as one of the first major contributors to UNHCR's COVID-19 response

Sony donated \$3 million from the Sony Global Relief Fund for COVID-19, established in 2020. This was the first major corporate contribution to UNHCR's COVID-19 appeal in early April. Sony complemented this by organizing an employee-matching gift programme, raising a further \$38,000 for UNHCR. Sony has been supporting UNHCR since 1991 through different initiatives, including in-kind donations and by sponsoring the UNHCR Refugee Film Festival.

UNHCR'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

<p>9.89 million refugees and other people of concern received essential health care services</p> <p>68 countries reporting</p>	<p>52% of countries included refugees in their national COVID-19 vaccination plans*</p> <p>28 countries reporting</p>	<p>64 million medical masks (surgical and N95/FFP2) procured</p>
<p>1.24 million women and girls accessed sexual and reproductive health services</p> <p>51 countries reporting</p>	<p>647,068 refugees and other people of concern (including children, parents and primary caregivers) provided with mental health and psychosocial support services</p> <p>75 countries reporting</p>	<p>85% of countries inhabited by refugees, IDPs and others of concern with feedback and complaints mechanisms functioning</p> <p>180 countries reporting</p>
<p>74% of countries where gender-based violence services were maintained or expanded in response to COVID-19</p> <p>115 countries reporting</p>	<p>16.09 million refugees, IDPs and other people of concern have accessed protection services</p> <p>151 countries reporting</p>	<p>3.3 million refugees & asylum seekers benefited from increased or expanded social protection</p> <p>85 countries reporting</p>
<p>1.26 million refugees, IDPs and others of concern received livelihood support</p> <p>85 countries reporting</p>	<p>Approximately 58.3 million refugees, IDPs and stateless persons are receiving or have received COVID-19 assistance**</p> <p>100 countries reporting</p>	<p>8.57 million refugees, IDPs and other people of concern received cash assistance related to the impact of COVID-19</p>
<p>1.6 million refugee children and youth enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary education levels</p> <p>58 countries reporting</p>	<p>1.57 million refugee children and youth out of school due to mandatory school closures in 58 countries</p> <p>58 countries reporting</p>	<p>934,023 children and youth supported with distance/home-based learning</p> <p>74 countries reporting</p>
<p>140,059 children 6-59 months admitted for treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM)</p> <p>29 countries reporting</p>	<p>55,183 children 6-59 months admitted for treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM)</p> <p>28 countries reporting</p>	<p>80% of countries where all areas inhabited by refugees, IDPs and others of concern are reached by information campaigns about COVID-19 pandemic risks</p> <p>120 countries reporting</p>

*This is a baseline as of 31 December 2020 and should not be used as the latest value in 2021 discussions.
 **COVID-19 assistance includes access to protection services, shelter, health, nutrition, education and livelihood support, or rights-based advocacy, information campaigns, etc. Different assistance modalities are being used, including in-kind and multipurpose cash assistance.



Pillars of change: Transforming UNHCR in 2020

© UNHCR/Showkat Alharfosh

Through the Habesha scholarship programme, which was expanded at the Global Refugee Forum, Zakariya—a refugee in Jordan’s Zaatari camp for eight years—has been selected for a scholarship to study for a BA in psychology in Mexico.

UNHCR’s change process was designed to better position it to protect and assist people of concern, work with others to promote solutions, and address new challenges and identify new opportunities. The transformation—still ongoing—encompassed multiple areas of work across a range of pillars. The Global Compact on Refugees, which is part of this transformation, set out a framework for ensuring more predictable and sustainable burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements in the context of large-scale movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic was thus both a “stress test” for UNHCR’s newly decentralized design and an accelerator of change.

importance of strategic collaboration, responsibility sharing and the inclusion of displaced people in national responses underpinning the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The [2020 High Commissioner’s Dialogue](#) focused on how putting these principles into practice could advance the protection and resilience of people forced to flee, and those hosting them during a pandemic.

Undaunted, many pledgers—States, NGOs, refugees, the private sector, academia, development actors, cities, faith leaders and other stakeholders—stepped up to fulfil their commitments. Many pledges were [adapted or accelerated to support the response to the pandemic](#).

By the end of 2020, UNHCR had received updates for nearly half of the pledges, with over 70% of updates indicating work in progress and 15% at the planning stage, while an encouraging 71 pledges were fulfilled in 2020. Over 230 good practices directly linked to the objectives of the GCR were shared on the [GCR Digital Platform](#), particularly in the areas of jobs and livelihoods, education and solutions.

It will be vital to keep matching technical, material or financial support from donors

to facilitate implementation of host countries’ pledges on protection and inclusion. Matching demonstrates burden- and responsibility-sharing in action, enabling pledging entities to combine their efforts to make a tangible impact and advance progress where more support is needed. For example, in Uganda, Denmark matched Uganda’s pledge for refugee inclusion in the national education system with 35 million krone. And the LEGO Foundation, as part of its pledge in the Play to Learn partnership, matched Bangladesh’s pledge to “design innovative refugee solutions” in developing a telecommunication model, to reach children and caregivers affected by COVID-19 in Rohingya camps and Bangladeshi host communities.

Key initiatives launched at the Forum also progressed. The three [Support Platforms](#) worked collaboratively to strengthen regional responses to forced displacement, increasing and diversifying their membership to include host and donor countries and other strategic partners. Support from the European Union significantly contributed to advancing these regional arrangements—an example of how cooperation with development partners is already catalyzing the implementation of the GCR by broadening the base of support. By mobilizing its global pledge, the Inter-Parliamentary Union—in partnership with UNHCR—brought together Members of

the European Parliament and parliamentarians in the IGAD region to identify strategic priorities for [forced displacement in the region](#), including through cross-regional solidarity around GRF pledges and the IGAD Support Platform and parliamentary diplomacy.

The [Asylum Capacity Support Group](#) also made advances in matching requests from host countries with donor support in Africa and the Americas, in areas such as strengthening registration, use of country of origin information and processing modalities.

The [Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network](#) secretariat was established in 2020, anchoring a network of scholarship and research on refugee issues, forced displacement and statelessness, and will be chaired by the University of Essex until 2023. As part of its activities and the [Carta de Santiago pledge](#), the Brazilian model of the [Sérgio Vieira de Mello Academic Chairs](#) is being expanded to different regions, with universities promoting refugee inclusion by providing services ranging from legal aid to health care.

The early signs of progress, despite significant challenges faced in 2020, are a testament to the willingness of governments and other actors to uphold commitments made at the Forum, continuing the global effort to build a better future for people forced to flee.

Find out more at the [Global Compact on Refugees website](#).

Global Strategic Priorities
Protection and solutions
See p. 15 for GSP results



Global Compact on Refugees

The pandemic abruptly shook up the context in which 1,400 pledges were made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum and High-Level Segment on Statelessness. COVID-19 tested the ability of UNHCR and partners to deliver protection and assistance. The pandemic reinforced the



Reimagining refugee camps and transforming livelihoods in Ethiopia

In 2019, Oxford University’s Refugee Studies Centre evaluated UNHCR and [IKEA Foundation’s livelihoods programme in Dollo Ado](#), Ethiopia, which focuses on agriculture, livestock, energy, and microfinance loans through a cooperative model. The programme’s positive impact includes greater cooperation between refugees and host community members, reported income increases, expansion of markets and the provision of electricity. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, this strategic partnership has successfully created innovative and sustainable solutions for



refugees. In 2020, the programme was recognized for its success by the International Finance Corporation and Financial Times at their Transformational Business Awards.



Decentralization and regionalization

UNHCR's new organizational model came into effect in January 2020, when seven newly created regional bureaux became operational in their respective regions. With this realization of one of the major transformational streams initiated by the High Commissioner, these new bureaux replaced existing regional management and support structures, such as bureaux at Headquarters, regional offices, support centres, units and hubs. UNHCR has also significantly strengthened the regional bureaux to perform a wide range of functions: protection and operational support, programme planning and resource management, monitoring, internal control and risk management, amongst others. Bringing these functions and capabilities closer to field operations enables better and faster support, which was put to the test in the organization's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unlike in past initiatives, the transformation was accompanied by significant delegation of authority. Revised internal delegation frameworks moved decision making away from Headquarters and closer to the point of delivery. The new Resource Allocation Framework enhanced the level of delegation of authority to better embrace decentralization and regionalization. Policy changes in budget management resulted in 69% of decisions being made at the regional or field level, representing some 44% of the additional resources, helping ensure timely allocation of resources to address protection and assistance needs. Regional bureau directors have significantly expanded authority to re-allocate financial resources where they are needed most within the region and the authority to appoint professional staff up to the P4 grade. Country representatives have clear and expanded authorities to re-allocate

resources and manage staffing through clearer, streamlined and more flexible authorities. Heads of sub-office have new authorities for budget allocation and human resources, within established parameters. Headquarters, bureaux and operations were supported to implement these changes in the frameworks.

Another significant change at country level was the introduction of incentive-based local fundraising, which enables country operations to expand their approved spending envelopes without approval from Headquarters. Funds raised from UN administered pooled funds such as CERF and country-based pooled funds increased 64% to \$151 million in 2020, compared with \$91.8 million in 2019. This increase was partly due to the delegated authority to the field as these funds are uniquely managed at country level, combined with increased funding from pooled funds for the COVID-19 response.

Moving the regional bureaux from Geneva (with the exception of the bureau for Europe) aligned UNHCR's structures more closely with other UN agencies and international NGO partners, significantly strengthening the Office's ability to engage with them at the regional level. For example, NGO consultations organized by UNHCR's regional bureaux allowed for more focused discussions on regional contexts and brought local civil society into the conversation. The newly-decentralized bureaux in Europe, the Americas and Africa also engaged with the Issue-Based Coalitions, regional groupings of UN bodies tackling cross-cutting issues such as the challenges posed by human mobility.

UNHCR's new regional presence also enabled greater engagement with regional intergovernmental organizations and mechanisms. UNHCR supported the IGAD platform to implement a regional refugee framework focusing on inclusion and assisting member states in East Africa, and also signed a memorandum of

understanding with the African Development Bank to mobilize and direct resources to the Sahel to support the primary health response and the resilience of vulnerable communities in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The creation of dedicated external engagement capacity in the bureaux has repositioned UNHCR, paving the way for long-term engagement and collaboration with key regional actors.



United Nations development system reform

Regionalization enhanced UNHCR's active engagement in the roll-out of the United Nations development system reform, including in the new regional collaborative platforms. The Office co-chaired Issue-Based Coalitions on human mobility, displacement and resilience across Africa, in Europe, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, and aligned itself with the United Nations country-level management and accountability framework, including linkages to performance appraisal of its country representatives.

UNHCR also supported the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19 offering guidance to Resident Coordinators on including refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people in the socioeconomic impact assessments. With no specific funding window created under the [Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#) for refugees and migrants, their inclusion in response plans was a challenge. As a way of helping governments and UN country teams identify the needs of forcibly displaced people, the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement funded collection of primary socioeconomic data through household and phone surveys in Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda and Uganda.

At the global level, UNHCR progressively

incorporated relevant elements of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review within its operations. UNHCR also participated in the finalization of the companion package to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Guidance, which now encourages United Nations country teams to include refugees, IDPs and stateless people in common country assessments.

UNHCR also issued internal guidance on programme alignment with and participation in the UNSDCF. Furthermore, UNHCR supported the United Nations development system-related Funding Compact, which aims to increase the quantity and the quality of development funding in return for greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability. UNHCR reports against the Compact's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals through the United Nations Development Coordination Office.



Human resources

As part of its COVID-19 response, UNHCR pivoted its learning curriculum to virtual delivery. This shift online unlocked greater opportunities for learning, regardless of location, and programmes were made available in more languages for broader access.

There was considerable focus on the importance of dialogue, learning and communication in how to manage teams and people. Managers received targeted support such as webinars to strengthen their ability to work and engage remotely with their teams. UNHCR also offered managers development tools and spaces for reflection in recognition of their role in creating and promoting safe, inclusive and respectful work environments. Over the year, 15,000 staff participated in at least one learning activity, with over 1,000 e-learning and 300 learning programmes made available in English and French.

Global Strategic Priorities
Protection and Solutions
See p. 15 for GSP results



Global Strategic Priorities
Human resources
See p. 17 for GSP results



Over 4,000 staff took part in 80 career webinars, 400 signed up for coaching or mentoring, and 400 managers took part in Reflective Leadership Dialogues on inclusion and creating enabling work environments.

A review of the performance management system was launched to re-evaluate existing practice and examine culture, policies and processes so as to build a new, more modern approach. This will be a key element in developing a positive employee experience and a workplace culture where UNHCR's a workforce thrives.

UNHCR's business continuity plans mitigated COVID-19's impact on human resources (HR) matters. Assignments continued to be managed without disruption, albeit remotely. Managers and HR staff globally were able to access lists of candidates in various talent pool profiles. This improved UNHCR's ability to identify local staffing strengths, and managers and HR staff could define best matches with their requirements. Screening and processing remained at Headquarters, providing for consistent oversight in accordance with rules and procedures. Over the year, 1,700 job openings were processed, 110 of which were for fast track situations; 52% of candidates externally recruited into the international professional category were female; and 33 talent pools were managed, with 1,300 applications received a month.

Alongside the international professional category, there was extensive work on revising the recruitment and assignment policy for local staff, including specific measures for increasing the gender balance and enabling hiring managers to consult more data on diversity and gender. Oversight measures ensured the process was free from bias and discrimination. Pre-vetting screenings for sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and misconduct were included in the policy on locally-recruited

staff and in the revised policy for the management of the affiliate workforce.

COVID-19 also put a sharp focus on UNHCR's occupational health and safety. It had to fulfil its mission to assist populations of concern without deviating from its duty to safeguard the health and safety of its workforce. Preventive action protected colleagues with underlying medical conditions, with offers to telework or relocate to where medical facilities were available, and personal protective equipment was supplied to those working in camps and communities. Local health care assessments helped operations to strengthen their staff's access to care, and medical support by phone was made available in several languages for personnel and their families.

UNHCR recognized how COVID-19 could create mental health stresses, as staff faced isolation, separation, multiple roles at home, and the difficulty of travelling for rest and recuperation. Psychosocial capacity was strengthened through the network of peer advisors and regional staff counsellors, and additional external mental health support was provided. UNHCR continued to be a leader in inter-agency efforts on health and safety matters throughout 2020 and was an active contributor to the UN System-Wide Task Force on Medical Evacuations, the inter-agency efforts to strengthen the medical first line of defence, and the UN vaccination strategy. This strengthened the representation of field concerns, which underpinned UN preparedness and response plans.



Data and information

UNHCR conducted an operational data review, examining its practices, processes and standards in the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, and other diversity considerations. The Office contributed to ["Data disaggregation of SDG indicators](#)

[by forced displacement](#)" and led the technical assessments for two reports on the inclusion of people with disabilities by the UN Special Rapporteurs on the rights of persons with disabilities and on the human rights of IDPs. UNHCR also developed a demographic model to estimate sex- and age-disaggregated data at global and regional level to strengthen evidence-based programming and advocacy.

UNHCR led inter-agency processes to develop monitoring frameworks, including a global inter-agency multi-sectoral COVID-19 monitoring framework in collaboration with IOM, OCHA, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNRWA, WFP and WHO among others. As part of the UNICEF-UNHCR Blueprint, UNHCR established 13 data projects to improve data interoperability and data sharing, and to support the objectives of the Blueprint for the inclusion of refugees in UNICEF and government data systems. There were improvements to UNHCR's statistical reporting, data collection and methodology, including a new Statistical Quality Assurance Framework. UNHCR co-led the Common Good Data Initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity to gather, access and manage strategic information and to improve analysis and communication of data as evidence.

The Office worked across the UN to develop the Secretary-General's Data Strategy and make more use of the UN's data. UNHCR helped to put the WFP-UNHCR Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub into operation, creating a joint targeting capability and supporting inter-agency collaboration. UNHCR and WFP's data sharing memorandum of understanding was put into action, resulting in the first implementation of biometric data access and data transfer solutions between agencies, integrating WFP's SCOPE with UNHCR's PRIMES ecosystem for beneficiary authentication. UNHCR further ensured interoperability

of data systems by issuing minimum standards to assist operations where WFP "Building Blocks" were implemented in refugee contexts. UNHCR provided technical leadership to the UN Common Cash Statement Working Group, and 2020 also saw the go-live of the improved, secured and automated sharing of resettlement data with the United States of America.



Results-based management

The design of UNHCR's new approach to results-based management (RBM) for multi-year planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting, named COMPASS, and the configuration of a new online system was finalized in the last quarter of 2020. An extensive training programme to roll out the first phase of the COMPASS approach and system, the "Plan for Results" phase, was developed in advance of the launch in early 2021. All operations are expected to finalize their strategies for 2022 during the second quarter of 2021, including 24 operations that are developing multi-year strategies. The new multi-year approach will see operations developing longer-term, quality protection and solution strategies using the UN system results chain and a global results framework aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also allows operations to formulate their own results and indicators. All these changes will facilitate UNHCR's engagement with national and UN development frameworks, in pursuit of the SDGs.

Global Strategic Priorities
Programme and Results-Based Management
See p. 16 for GSP results



Global Strategic Priorities
Use of Data and Information
See p. 15 for GSP results





Risk management and integrity

© UNHCR/Maria Rapido Rogozino

In Ibarra, in Ecuador, UNHCR, firefighters and youth volunteers built three XL refugee housing units to increase the capacity of the municipal community diner, providing a bigger and safer place where refugees and members of the host community can be served 400 meals a day.



Staying, delivering, and managing risks through the pandemic

The pandemic posed risks unlike any faced by UNHCR in its history, compelling UNHCR to increase its response whilst minimizing its physical footprint. From the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, risk management colleagues across the organization contributed to COVID-19 preparedness, ensuring that pandemic-related risks were rapidly identified, managed and monitored. A COVID-19 risk register gave an overview of the risks faced by refugees and UNHCR, including organization-wide risks to business continuity. Identifying risks helped to support early action and coordination with broader UN coordination, from contingency planning to procurement. By elaborating the risks linked to COVID-19 and pointing towards solutions, the register aimed to minimize operational disruption, provide a framework for action, and support the organization's effort to stay and deliver in extraordinary circumstances.

When physical distancing threatened to interrupt protection and support services, operations actively sought to remain engaged and responsive to the needs of people of concern. UNHCR expanded cash assistance, increasing contactless and mobile money payments. To address new challenges this posed, anti-fraud training was conducted in Greece, Somalia and South Sudan, whilst the accountability chain of the cash assistance programme in Yemen and in other operations was strengthened. Increased reports of gender-based violence and risks of sexual exploitation and abuse prompted operations to increase focus on communicating with communities, providing ways for people in need to continue to seek support from UNHCR or its partners. Inside UNHCR, the crisis drove innovation and change, with heightened attention to duty of care to the workforce and use of digital technology to communicate. Following a risk assessment in Bangladesh, and to mitigate immediate risks to the health of personnel, the operation converted part

of the office to a field hospital. In parallel, internal dialogue and mental wellbeing services were put in place.

As the pandemic evolves, robust risk management will help UNHCR prepare for potential new waves whilst keeping longer term challenges in sight.

Supporting operations through the risk network and building for the future

The year saw the conclusion of UNHCR's Risk Management 2.0 initiative, in which the organization invested in people, tools and processes to better manage uncertainties. The initiative brought a noticeable improvement in the quality of risk analysis and mitigation measures, which in turn has increased transparency, data-driven decision-making and accountability.

By the end of 2020, each of the seven regional bureaux and 12 high-risk countries had a senior risk adviser in place. Despite travel restrictions, the network of risk advisers provided learning and support to more than 1,800 colleagues, increasing overall use and knowledge of risk management in UNHCR and empowering the workforce to scan the horizon for risks and opportunities, and to make informed decisions in the light of these. Echoing the emphasis that the High Commissioner has put on integrity-related risks, close to 100 senior leaders were trained in reputational risk management and crisis communications.

To support a coordinated and integrated response to crises, UNHCR took a situational risk approach, involving key country operations. When Burundian refugees requested to repatriate, risk and protection colleagues from Burundi and asylum countries conducted a joint risk assessment around voluntary repatriation. They identified risks affecting the objective of a return in safety and dignity,

as well as measures to address such risks, providing a roadmap for action.

The improving quality of risk registers has provided UNHCR with up-to-date and accurate risk information. To support colleagues in addressing high risks in areas such as cash assistance, procurement, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and partnership management, short and practical risk management tools were developed and disseminated. UNHCR's risk management policy was updated, reflecting changes in international norms and UNHCR's decentralization and regionalization process. To embed risk management into its core processes, UNHCR took decisive steps to reflect the new results-based management approach in its risk management tools, so that considering risks and opportunities becomes an inherent part of strategic planning.

As the number of people who depend on UNHCR's support is ever-growing and crisis in displacement becomes more complex, combining the effects of violence, pandemic and climate change, taking and managing the risks required to deliver our mandate will remain a priority for the organization. Whilst good progress was made with the Risk Management 2.0 initiative, work needs to continue to further strengthen UNHCR's risk culture in all operational and management areas. To that end, a five-year strategy is under development.

Integrity and oversight

As with other parts of UNHCR, the pandemic presented UNHCR's independent oversight providers with a unique set of challenges that had to be overcome. By adapting and innovating, a revised plan and new working methods were in place by the end of March 2020, ensuring oversight could continue.

The response to the COVID-19 emergency included deferring a number of reviews; moving to remote auditing and reviews; providing advisory and thematic audit and review work; ensuring COVID-related questions were embedded into their work; and reporting in a more agile, short-form format to provide ongoing feedback and response to UNHCR management. Towards the end of 2020, coordinated planning conversations between the key oversight providers were undertaken to ensure a well-balanced and coherent overall oversight plan was in place for 2021.

There was also oversight of UNHCR’s pandemic response, including reviews of supply chain and procurement activities; partner selection and management; distribution of cash assistance and core relief items; vendor and emergency procurement fraud risk; controls over implementing partners; and remote programme and protection monitoring. These were undertaken through a mixture of advisory and audit modalities.

In the past five years, misconduct complaints grew from 399 in 2016 to 664 in 2017, 1,186 in 2018 and 1,226 in 2019.

In 2020, the pandemic hampered reporting of misconduct complaints, which declined 7% to 1,146. For 2021, based on increasing numbers of complaints at the end of 2020, a return to pre-pandemic levels of 1,200 per annum is predicted. During 2020, UNHCR opened investigations implicating 142 individuals and finalized 130 investigation reports, of which 55% (71 out of 130) were substantiated.

UNHCR continues to invest in measures to enhance oversight. The office of the newly-appointed Inspector General (IGO) updated its strategy and thoroughly reviewed its operations, resulting in further realignment of IGO staff to regional locations and a comprehensive change to the IGO’s strategic oversight function. It introduced improved standard operating procedures relating to complaints intake assessment processes, and for applying a victim-centred approach to investigations, and its digital capability was enhanced with new forensic tools and an upgrade of the complaints case management system.



SPOTLIGHT: Preventing fraud committed by people of concern

As part of decentralization and regionalization, regional anti-fraud focal points were supported in enhancing capacity in their respective operations to improve the detection and response to fraud by people of concern. This led to the identification of evidence-based gaps and the subsequent development of context-specific anti-fraud tools and materials. An internal data visualization tool was developed to monitor performance in fraud management, trends analysis and reporting. The tool allows for easy reporting instances of fraud based on real-time proGres v4 data, thereby facilitating management and operational responses. In operations using proGres v4, there were 105 cases detected in 2020 (up from 79 in 2019), with about 40% of detected cases resolved during the year. More than 90% of operations conducting individual processing of people of concern’s information now have designated personnel and, with over 300 staff having received dedicated anti-fraud training, UNHCR’s ability to detect fraud by people of concern has increased significantly, as have more structured responses.



High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi meets young Venezuelan survivors of sexual exploitation at the Fundación Renacer in Riohacha, Colombia.

The High Commissioner’s role as IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment

Tackling sexual misconduct, within UNHCR and in the wider humanitarian sector, is critical to UNHCR’s vision of a trusted, respectful and inclusive environment where the people it serves and those who support them feel safe, heard, equipped and empowered. In 2020, the High Commissioner brought this commitment forward by taking on the role of IASC Champion on [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment](#), launching several initiatives to further his [three main priority areas](#) of bolstering prevention, expanding safe spaces and promoting respectful use of authority.

These initiatives included learning packages, communications materials, and best practice guidance, some of it aimed at capacity building and awareness-raising amongst humanitarian personnel and affected communities.

Other aspects supported humanitarian leadership in building respectful and inclusive working environments and a speak-up culture, and some initiatives proved particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Examples included a learning package for NGO partners—[“Saying NO to sexual misconduct”](#)—which was jointly developed with IOM, WFP and others. It fostered creative engagement and dialogue and works through the implications of power differentials and people’s responsibilities as humanitarian workers. The package includes video, case studies and testimonies, is easily tailored for different audiences and contexts, and is currently available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese. Another initiative was the [PSEA Community Outreach and Communication Fund](#), launched by UNHCR and ICVA in April 2020 at a time when COVID-19 and related restrictions challenged efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. The Fund provides small-scale grants to NGO

projects supporting community-led efforts to raise awareness of prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Of 1,600 applications received, [19 grants were awarded to organizations across all regions](#). A range of projects developed targeted multimedia awareness-raising tools, such as that of the NGO Lotus Flower Iraq. The NGO launched campaigns for IDPs which prioritized strengthening reporting channels in IDP camps and engagement with women and girls at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

A communications package was made available in English and French to guide IASC Principals in meaningful discussions with staff on sexual misconduct. The tool uses impactful videos to facilitate often uncomfortable discussions and aims to promote a speak-up culture and, although designed for face-to-face engagement, the package lends itself to online use.

The High Commissioner closed his tenure as IASC Champion by hosting a session with all IASC Principals on values, attitudes, and organizational culture, providing a forum for reflection on the underlying factors in organizational culture and behaviour that give rise to sexual misconduct and abuse of power. A similar session was held with the CEB Task Force on sexual harassment, hosted by UNHCR's Deputy High Commissioner. Two additional products will be finalized in the course of 2021, an e-learning for NGO partners on investigating sexual exploitation and abuse, and a collection of good practices on organizational culture change. While the High Commissioner's tenure as IASC Champion has ended, close and strong collaboration with all its partners will underscore UNHCR's efforts to tackle sexual misconduct, as it is only through inter-agency and broader partnerships that such abuses can be eradicated.

Ethics

Even with the constraints of the virtual environment dictated by the pandemic, the mandatory Code of Conduct dialogue sessions still reached 74% of the workforce in 120 operations. The sessions, with their focus on trust and collaboration, and the increased links to mitigating integrity risks, contributed to an organizational culture valuing trust, collaboration, dialogue and integrity.

There was a nearly 100% compliance rate with the UN Financial Disclosure Programme, and 430 colleagues were assisted with professional, confidential, ethics advice on issues like conflicts of interest and engagement on social media. This contributed to the overall integrity of the organization and promoted ethical decision-making and behaviour in accordance with UN standards and values.

There was a 17% increase from 2019 in requests from personnel for advice on protection against retaliation, indicating higher engagement with and trust in institutional efforts to protect colleagues speaking up, as well as progress in creating a speak-up culture. These efforts included an external "SpeakUp!" helpline providing UNHCR personnel with an additional channel for reporting misconduct, including sexual misconduct, and raising other concerns and grievances.



UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement

© UNHCR/Marie-Joëlle Jean-Charles

Daoud sits outside his family's temporary shelter at a site in Al Mukha, Taizz, in Yemen. They fled At Tuhayat 18 months ago when fighting destroyed their home.

In many places around the world, internal displacement has become chronic. At the end of 2020, the global number of internally displaced people due to violence and conflict reached an estimated 48.6 million, the highest ever recorded and 5.1 million more than in 2019.

In 2020, major drivers of forced displacement were escalating conflict and violence, massive human rights abuses ranging from forced recruitment to torture and rape, and the impact of climate change, including depleted natural resources, diminished crop yields and livestock shortages. The pandemic itself was also a cause of flight, with recorded instances of people moving from crowded urban locations to rural settings in an attempt to avoid contagion, including in Somalia and Yemen.

Within this context, UNHCR continued its stepped-up engagement in situations of

internal displacement. Spending on IDP programmes under Pillar 4 rose 9%, with an additional \$21.5 million transferred from the Operational Reserve for emergency response to nine operations (in the Central African Republic, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Panama multi-country office, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine). Notably, decentralization empowered regional bureaux and representatives to quickly redeploy funds to meet IDP emergency response needs.

UNHCR combined coordination leadership with field operations, bringing delivery closer to people of concern, enhancing credibility with cluster partners and strengthening relations with governments, especially at local level. Engagement via community-based protection networks, telephone hotlines, and other virtual means helped to make up for the physical distancing introduced

For more information on internal displacement and related trends, see Chapter 3 of the [2020 Global Trends report](#)



to fight COVID-19. UNHCR Yemen in particular established best practices in this regard, helping to guide engagement in other locations.

UNHCR moved during the year towards integrated programming inclusive of all population groups in an operational context, including host communities. In Colombia, the Casa de los Derechos project was an example of an area-based approach that brings legal assistance and other benefits to co-located IDPs, refugees, returnees and local communities experiencing similar protection needs and risks. In Afghanistan, UNHCR applied an area-based, whole of community approach aimed at mitigating protection risks and vulnerabilities of all affected communities while facilitating sustainable solutions including reintegration of refugee returnees and IDPs.

Investments in solutions underpinned UNHCR's IDP work. Solutions can be achieved where local communities are resilient, and this requires investments in national capacity, including through international financial institutions. UNHCR's IDP policy identifies solutions as integral to all IDP engagement, be it through support to local authorities and communities or enhancing partnerships beyond the traditional humanitarian stakeholders and including development actors. Advocacy and related interventions for the inclusion of IDPs in national services and pandemic-related safety nets established by States remain central to the approach.

UNHCR closely engaged with [the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#) by sharing experiences and supporting the global and national discourse on IDP solutions, contributing to dialogue with IDPs and with experts. UNHCR's contributions to the Panel were through consultations and written submissions

based on its extensive experience in advancing solutions in refugee and IDP settings.

Tri-cluster coordination

On coordination, within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee framework, UNHCR leads the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) with IFRC and the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM) with IOM. UNHCR also coordinates national protection, shelter and CCCM clusters, usually with NGO partners. Strategic direction for UNHCR's cluster engagement is provided jointly by UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioners for Operations and for Protection, thus elevating the strategic impact of cluster leadership within UNHCR, especially at regional bureaux encompassing all country operations.

UNHCR continues to build strategic partnerships for IDP protection, including by co-chairing the three-year, multi-stakeholder plan of action for the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GP20). In 2020, following regional exchanges with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), UNHCR spearheaded exchanges on internal displacement in the Americas, Asia and Middle East, in collaboration with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

[UNHCR's IDP Initiative 2020-2021](#) and its quarterly updates facilitate public dissemination of notable activities in IDP operations, with special focus on community approaches, partnerships and solutions.

Global Protection Cluster

The GPC and national protection clusters advocated for the rights of 78 million people in need of protection, of which 31.5 million people received assistance in 26 operations. UNHCR led 29 out of 32 field protection clusters and cluster-like mechanisms. The GPC Coordinator undertook field missions to Burkina Faso and Iraq while GPC Operations Cell members undertook field missions to Ethiopia and Sudan and provided remote technical support and sharing of good practices to field protection clusters. This saw the GPC working with over 1,000 diverse partners around the world.

[The 2020 Global Protection Forum](#), hosted by the GPC's Strategic Advisory Group and the four GPC areas of responsibility, gathered the Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Housing Land and Property and Mine Action Areas of Responsibility brought together over 3,000 humanitarian, peace and development partners, academics, UN Member States and donors to discuss contemporary protection challenges and gaps, exchange lessons learned and provide strategic direction.

Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (co-led with IOM)

The global CCCM cluster supported 23 country-level clusters and cluster-like structures in 2020, with UNHCR leading or co-leading 19. The UNHCR CCCM Global Cluster Team developed "[Camp/site management interim operational guidance for COVID-19 readiness and response](#)", containing key considerations to incorporate into pandemic preparedness and operational planning. The Team also provided input and support for the IASC's interim guidance

on "[Scaling-up COVID-19 outbreak readiness and response operations in humanitarian situations, including camps and camp-like settings](#)", guidance which was jointly produced with IFRC, IOM, WHO and UNHCR.

The team delivered virtual COVID-19-related capacity-building workshops for Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, Pakistan, Mexico, Yemen and the Latin America sub-region. A virtual mission to Sudan supported the establishment of a COVID-19 IDP camp coordination task force, and the roll-out of a survey on preparedness gaps and services. Continuous consultations with stakeholders improved CCCM delivery in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mozambique, Myanmar, Somalia and Sudan. This was done through a combination of scaling up staffing, resource mobilization and advocacy, capacity building, and coordination and operational support missions.

Global Shelter Cluster (co-led with IFRC)

UNHCR led 16 of the 30 country-level shelter clusters and 19 of the 37 shelter coordination mechanisms, with one newly activated in 2020 in the DRC. The UNHCR-led clusters provided shelter and core relief items to over 12 million IDPs through 535 partners in conflict situations, representing 81.6% of all displaced people assisted with shelter globally. Some 2.2 million people were reached with COVID-19-specific shelter activities in 12 out of the 16 UNHCR-led clusters with activities such as shelter and core relief items for medical, quarantine or isolation facilities, or to reduce overcrowded living conditions.

In 2020, the cluster launched [rental market guidance](#), updated the [coordination toolkit](#) and delivered the [annual meeting](#) and [coordinators' workshop](#) online, consisting of 59 events, including thematic sessions, country cluster briefings and regional events with over 1,000 participants. In addition, the GSC hosted monthly [webinars](#) in shelter response to COVID-19 with coordinators and operational staff.

The UNHCR GSC team provided 132 days of field mission support in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, in addition to 274 days of remote support. Specifically on COVID-19, the UNHCR-led GSC team supported countries in adapting their response and in providing resources through a specific [COVID-19 shelter library](#).

In conclusion, important progress was made towards the UNHCR objective of a more decisive and predictable engagement in situations of internal displacement. An acceleration of efforts ensured a strengthened organizational response, as required by the revised IDP Policy, encompassing UNHCR's coordination and operational delivery interventions, and covering the full spectrum of response, including preparedness and solutions.



Qatar Charity continues to support displaced families in Yemen and Lebanon

Since 2012, Qatar Charity (QC) has been one of UNHCR's top private partners and has supported around 1.4 million displaced individuals. In 2020 alone, QC supported Syrian refugees in Lebanon and [IDPs in Yemen](#) with contributions of \$3.5 million. These funds were used to provide urgent cash assistance for internally displaced families in Yemen and Syrian refugee families in Lebanon to help them meet their most urgent needs and mitigate the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Forcibly displaced Mozambican families recover from heavy rain and flooding at an IDP site in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique.

Climate change increases the risk of displacement, makes it harder for displaced people to return home, and poses a multitude of risks and protection concerns during displacement. Approximately 20% of the world's population lives in a highly climate-vulnerable country, but refugees and IDPs are particularly at risk with nearly 90% of refugees under UNHCR's mandate coming from a highly vulnerable country. These same countries host over 40% of refugees and nearly 70% of IDPs displaced by conflict.

Climate change is already a threat to UNHCR's preparedness, response and solutions work. In 2020, droughts, flooding, storms and hurricanes posed challenges to UNHCR operations from Bangladesh to the Sahel to Central America, and globally there were 30.7 million new displacements due to disasters. This was the highest figure in

a decade, and over three times higher than the 9.8 million displaced by conflict.

As the world continues to heat rapidly, and as the risks of displacement only increase, UNHCR has stepped up its commitment and ambition to tackle the humanitarian and protection challenges of the climate emergency. The office of the Special Advisor on Climate Action was established in January 2020 to provide strategic guidance, oversight and expertise in shaping UNHCR's climate action agenda and responding to growing protection concerns.

The [Strategic Framework for Climate Action \(SFCA\)](#) was developed, setting out the parameters of UNHCR's response under three pillars:

- **Law and policy:** legal and normative guidance and policy engagement to better protect people of concern in the context of climate change and disasters.

- **Operations:** strengthening the resilience of displaced populations to climate and environmental risks, enhancing preparedness and response to displacement in disaster situations, and protecting the environment in displacement settings.
- **UNHCR's environmental footprint:** reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and minimizing its environmental impact.

As part of the law and policy pillar, UNHCR released [“Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters”](#). This provided guidance for States, legal practitioners and other actors in applying international refugee and human rights law to protect people displaced across borders in the context of climate change and disasters. UNHCR also continued cooperation with academics, legal experts and practitioners in the area, providing technical support to research papers and intervening upon invitation at conferences and other events, and thus widening the network of partners. A key example of such an opportunity was afforded by “COVID-19 and climate change: what can we learn?” at the High Commissioner’s annual Dialogue on Protection under the theme “Protection challenges during pandemics”.

UNHCR’s long-standing support to the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda continued as part of the State-led Platform on Disaster Displacement, along with IOM, was formalized through a memorandum of understanding. As a member of the Warsaw International

Mechanism for Loss and Damage’s Task Force on Displacement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNHCR supported Parties’ consideration of policy and measures to avert, minimize and address climate-related displacement. At the regional level, UNHCR contributed to inter-agency dialogue with the European Union on human mobility related to climate change and the development of policy and guidance on adaptation and preparedness.

As part of the operations pillar of the SFCA, climate and environmental risk related to supply were integrated in a new procurement policy, including greener procurement of core relief items, and efforts are underway to move towards greener packaging. There was also a review of the [impact of cash assistance and the use of core relief item donations on the environment](#).

In the first year of its 10-year ambition, [the Clean Energy Challenge \(CEC\)](#) graduated from an aspiration to a mechanism for implementation, a [further step](#) towards the goal of bringing affordable, reliable and sustainable energy to all settlements of forcibly displaced people and nearby host communities by 2030. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR plays a catalytic role, building partnerships and advocating greater engagement of business actors, governments, development actors, NGOs, and experts to support the CEC.

Recognizing the need to increase preparedness for situations where UNHCR is called upon to respond in non-conflict-related emergencies,

operational guidance was developed on “IDP protection responses in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change”. This focuses on key protection issues and priorities during the preparedness and emergency response phase.

Lastly, under the third pillar, UNHCR is reducing its own environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions in line with Greening the Blue, the UN system-wide commitment to improve environmental sustainability. In 2020, UNHCR achieved climate neutrality for the second year running through offsets and developed a greening and sustainability strategy focusing on four areas:

- The *Green Box* initiative uses energy meters in UNHCR offices to measure global energy consumption. In 2020, 225 offices in 115 countries enrolled in the initiative.
- The *Green Data* initiative creates a data warehouse that helps identify opportunities to transition to renewable energy.

- The *Green Fund* is an innovative financing mechanism to power field offices with renewable energy, with pilots planned in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.
- Promoting energy efficient practices and eco-conscious behaviours throughout UNHCR. For example, a carpooling project in Lebanon involving UNHCR and UNICEF will contribute to financial efficiencies, reduced emissions and optimized fleet sizes.

The SFCA recognizes that the magnitude of the climate emergency requires unprecedented collaboration to meet the growing protection challenges and achieve impact at scale. In this spirit, UNHCR led the development of an interagency predictive analytics project addressing the interconnected risks in the Sahel and how climate change will affect the humanitarian, development, and peace and security sectors.

© UNHCR/Janine Chennouf



SPOTLIGHT: The impacts of the climate emergency on displacement

A [data visualization](#) shows how the climate emergency is converging with other threats to drive new displacement and increase the vulnerability of those already forced to flee.