

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Background Guide

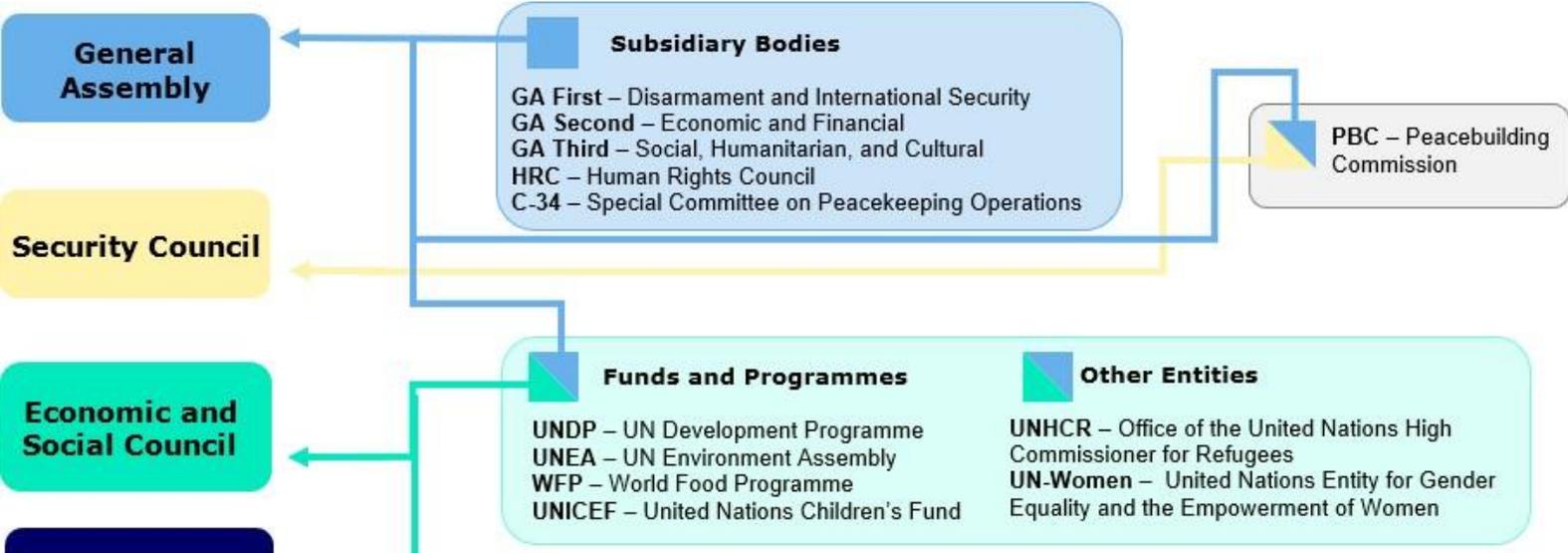


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United Nations System at TEXMUN

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at TEXMUN and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

Introduction

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations (UN) agency whose primary purpose is the protection of the welfare and rights of refugees.¹ The UN General Assembly established the body in 1950 to address the high number of displaced Europeans after World War II with a three year mandate.² However, the General Assembly soon began proposing various resolutions to extend the body's work to groups of people not included in its original scope.³ UNHCR's first significant emergency followed a violent Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, and highlighted its essential role in delivering aid to those fleeing and seeking refuge in neighboring states.⁴ The 1960s' decolonization of Africa led to UNHCR's first involvement in a region outside of Europe.⁵ During the subsequent decades, UNHCR further expanded its reach to Asia and Latin America in response to the displacing violence of ethnic cleansing, organized crime, and armed groups.⁶ Due to the need for UNHCR's continued work, the General Assembly decided in 2003 to prolong its mandate indefinitely.⁷

Most of UNHCR's resources are dedicated to field operations that address the needs of forcibly displaced persons, including 25.4 million refugees, 40 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 10 million stateless persons, and 3.1 million asylum seekers.⁸ A refugee is a person who, fearing conflict or persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political conviction, has left the state of their nationality or habitual residence.⁹ Whether they are unable or unwilling to go back to previous residences, refugees are protected under international law from forced return to conditions that may risk their lives and/or freedom.¹⁰ IDPs differ in that while they have had to flee their homes, they have not crossed an international border, often making them more difficult to reach.¹¹ Stateless people have been denied a nationality due to discrimination, state succession, or conflict, and subsequently suffer limited access to employment, medical attention, education, and overall freedom of movement.¹² Asylum seekers are those looking for protection in a different state, but whose claim for refugee status has not been ascertained.¹³ Additionally, UNHCR aids returnees, those who voluntarily return to their states of origin after fleeing.¹⁴ The rising number "forced migration" victims is usually attributed to the deteriorating situations or ongoing conflicts in states such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, and Myanmar.¹⁵ UNHCR also works closely with other agencies to address the needs of an estimated 18.8 million individuals who have been displaced due to natural disasters, such as the ongoing drought in Somalia.¹⁶

¹ UNHCR, *What We Do*, 2018.

² UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*, 1949; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2018.

³ UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2018.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ UNHCR, *Americas*, 2018; UNHCR, *Asia and the Pacific*, 2018; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2018.

⁷ UN General Assembly, *Implementing actions proposed by UNHCR to strengthen the capacity of his Office to carry out its mandate (A/RES/58/153)*, 2003.

⁸ UNHCR, *Executive Committee*, 2018; UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2018; UNHCR, *Who We Help*, 2018.

⁹ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967; UNHCR, *Refugees*, 2018.

¹⁰ UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2018; UNHCR, *Refugees*, 2018.

¹¹ UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2018.

¹² UNHCR, *Ending Statelessness*, 2018; UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2018.

¹³ UNHCR, *Asylum-Seekers*, 2018; UNHCR, *UNHCR 2015 Global Trends, Forced Displacement*, 2016.

¹⁴ UNHCR, *Returnees*, 2018.

¹⁵ Forced Migration Online, *What is forced migration?*, 2012; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, 2018.

¹⁶ UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2017*, 2018, p. 180.

UNHCR provides a variety of humanitarian aid, including food and nutritional supplements, basic shelter as well as long-term accommodation such as camps or other forms of housing, cash assistance, and legal services.¹⁷ While immediate assistance in crises constitutes a large portion of the body's work, UNHCR's larger goal is to help refugees find durable solutions to rebuild their lives.¹⁸ From 1945 to 1985, UNHCR focused mainly on resettlement, the transferring of refugees from an asylum state to a different one willing to grant them permanent settlement.¹⁹ As the causes of displacement increasingly varied, the agency began to utilize the concept of voluntary repatriation, the refugees' return to their state of origin.²⁰ As the number of cases related to refugees seeking to return home expanded during the 1990s, UNHCR's role in reintegration into home states evolved to include infrastructure and community development, as well as an increased focus on reconciliation and peacebuilding in affected communities.²¹ For cases in which repatriation is not feasible, UNHCR focuses its efforts on refugee integration into host states; this includes economic, legal, social, and cultural components and often the granting of asylum or citizenship.²² The protection of stateless persons' rights to nationality constitutes a large portion of this work and is carried out through the advocacy of more inclusive nationality laws, provision of guidance materials, highlighting good practices for birth registration, and assistance in overcoming civil registration obstacles.²³

Given the extensive resources needed by host communities for the above strategies, the UN General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration) in 2016, committing global support and responsibility in dealing with the large numbers of forcibly displaced persons.²⁴ It established the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF), a global-scale plan to guarantee refugees their rights and the predominant framing tool for UNHCR's proposed global compact for refugees, released in July 2018.²⁵

Governance, Structure, and Membership

UNHCR, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, currently employs over 11,517 national and international staff members across 128 Member States.²⁶ Moreover, UNHCR has increased its initial \$300,000 budget to \$8,275,300,000 in 2018 to address the needs of the 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide.²⁷ UNHCR falls under the UN Programmes and Funds, reports annually to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and is governed by the Member States that make up its Executive Committee (ExCom).²⁸ The ExCom approves the agency's annual program priorities and budget.²⁹ Member States are elected by ECOSOC as members of the ExCom according to equitable geographical allocations.³⁰ The ExCom was originally comprised of 24 members, but has since grown to 102 Member States.³¹ The committee reports directly to the General Assembly Third Committee, and follows directives issued by either the General Assembly or ECOSOC.³² The ExCom meets every

¹⁷ UNHCR, *Cash in Hand*, 2011; UNHCR, *Protection*, 2018.

¹⁸ UNHCR, *Solutions*, 2018.

¹⁹ Chimni, *From Resettlement to Involuntary Repatriation*, 1999, p. 1; UNHCR, *Resettlement*, 2018.

²⁰ Chimni, *From Resettlement to Involuntary Repatriation*, 1999, p. 1; UNHCR, *Voluntary Repatriation*, 2018.

²¹ Macrae, *Aiding Peace ... and War: UNHCR, Returnee Reintegration, and the Relief-Development Debate*, 1999.

²² UNHCR, *Local Integration*, 2018.

²³ UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2017*, 2018, pp. 16, 30, 116.

²⁴ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1)*, 2016, pp. 1-2.

²⁵ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1)*, 2016, pp. 16-24; UNHCR, *The Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR Quick Guide*, 2018, p. 2.

²⁶ UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*, 1949; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2018.

²⁷ UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2018; UNHCR ExCom, *Update on budgets and funding for 2018 and reporting on 2017*, 2018.

²⁸ New Zealand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 258; UNHCR, *Governance and Oversight*, 2018.

²⁹ UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³¹ UNHCR, *ExCom plenary sessions*, 2018.

³² UNHCR, *ExCom Membership*, 2018.

October to review financial matters for the coming year, advise the High Commissioner, authorize appeals for funds, and approve upcoming targets.³³ In 1995, the ExCom created a Standing Committee, which meets three times per year to discuss the work of the body as a whole and any new situations that arise.³⁴ In January 2016, the General Assembly elected High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, to serve a five-year term.³⁵ Grandi works in close collaboration with the Senior Executive Team, comprised of the Deputy High Commissioner, Kelly Clements, the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, George William Okoth-Obbo, and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk.³⁶

UNHCR's \$8,275,300,000 budget rests on four pillars: refugees, stateless people, reintegration programs, and IDPs.³⁷ The budget stems almost entirely from voluntary donations by Member States, intergovernmental institutions, corporations, foundations, and individuals worldwide.³⁸ To acquire these donations, UNHCR releases an annual Global Appeal that provides detailed information regarding the major areas of concern for UNHCR, as well as supplementary appeals that address specific situations.³⁹ The budget also includes contributions from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for situations requiring immediate response, such as a natural disaster or violent conflict.⁴⁰

Mandate, Function, and Powers

The basis for UNHCR's mandate is Article 14 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), which specifically recognizes the right of all individuals to seek asylum in another state.⁴¹ The founding document of UNHCR is General Assembly resolution 428 (V), known as the *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (1950).⁴² Here, UNHCR's mandate is defined as: "providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting governments and ... private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities."⁴³

Other documents that guide the work of UNHCR include the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which defines the term "refugee" as well as the rights and obligations of refugees, and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which expanded the 1951 Convention and UNHCR's mandate to include refugees from conflicts occurring after 1951.⁴⁴ UNHCR's mandate also includes other groups, such as stateless people, as defined in the 1954 *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, and the 1961 *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*.⁴⁵ The 1998 *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, adopted by ECOSOC, outline the rights and protections for IDPs.⁴⁶ However, IDP

³³ UNHCR, *ExCom Membership*, 2018; UNHCR, *ExCom Structure and Meetings*, 2018.

³⁴ UNHCR, *ExCom Membership*, 2018; UNHCR, *ExCom Structure and Meetings*, 2018.

³⁵ UNHCR, *The High Commissioner*, 2018.

³⁶ UNHCR, *Senior Executive Team*, 2018; UNHCR ExCom, *Update on budgets and funding for 2018 and reporting on 2017*, 2018.

³⁷ UNHCR, *Biennial programme budget 2016-2017 (revised) of the Office of UNHCR*, 2016.

³⁸ UNHCR, *Donors*, 2018; UNHCR, *Partnerships*, 2018; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017: Working in Partnerships*, 2016.

³⁹ UNHCR, *The Global Appeal and Supplementary Appeals*, 2016; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017*, 2016.

⁴⁰ UNHCR, *UN Sister Organizations*, 2018.

⁴¹ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

⁴² UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 2.

⁴³ UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 6.

⁴⁴ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2018.

⁴⁵ UNHCR, *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*, 1961; UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, 1954; UNHCR, *Ending Statelessness*, 2018.

⁴⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/53/Add.2 (1998))*, 1998.

assistance requires consideration of state sovereignty and therefore strong coordination mechanisms.⁴⁷ In 2007, the ExCom adopted the policy framework and implementation strategy titled *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement*.⁴⁸ The framework emphasizes the agency's primary responsibility to refugees and stipulates that aid to IDPs must be given in collaboration with national governments, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN agencies.⁴⁹ As such, the body's work with IDPs operates on a "cluster" approach, in which UNHCR coordinates with relevant agencies to deliver aid ranging from health care to shelter.⁵⁰ The mandate of UNHCR was further expanded in the 2011 ExCom report entitled *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons Affected by Natural Disasters*.⁵¹ The report emphasizes UNHCR's primary focus on conflict-related disasters, and that its role in natural disaster relief should be limited to pre-existing refugee or displacement operations.⁵² Notably, paragraph seven draws attention to Member States as primary actors in initiating and coordinating humanitarian response and UNHCR's actions as complementary to those of local governments.⁵³

In recent years, partnerships have become central to the organization's activities and priorities.⁵⁴ The Secretary-General called for the first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), held on 23-24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey.⁵⁵ Prior to the summit, UNHCR was involved in multiple thematic and regional consultations, delivering key messages for fostering a more inclusive humanitarian system, bridging the humanitarian-development divide, and restructuring how the humanitarian field meets its financial needs.⁵⁶ At the WHS, participants highlighted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) to overcome the humanitarian-development divide, meaning the lack of coordination between overlapping agencies of humanitarian and development aid.⁵⁷ Cooperation and partnerships also underpin the CRRF, whose implementation and development into a global compact on refugees is UNHCR's responsibility, as stipulated in the New York Declaration.⁵⁸

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

UNHCR held its 68th ExCom session between 2-6 October 2017.⁵⁹ The ExCom's debate focused on several topics related to the protection of refugees, including stronger national asylum systems and UNHCR's goal to eradicate statelessness by 2024.⁶⁰ The committee's discussions also addressed the need for burden- and responsibility-sharing in aiding displaced persons, a central theme in the implementation and refinement of the CRRF as well as the proposed global compact on refugees.⁶¹

⁴⁷ Cohen, *Sovereignty as Responsibility: The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 2003; UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2018.

⁴⁸ UNHCR ExCom, *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy*, 2007.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2018.

⁵¹ UNHCR ExCom, *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons Affected by Natural Disasters*, 2011.

⁵² Ibid., p. 3.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ UNHCR, *Strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016, pp. 6-7; Sustainable Development Solutions Network et al., *Bridging the humanitarian-development divide*, 2016, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1)*, 2016, pp. 16-24.

⁵⁹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme: Report of the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/1176)*, 2017, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶¹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme: Report of the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/1176)*, 2017, p. 11.

Since the establishment of the CRRF in 2016, UNHCR has overseen the framework's application in 12 states within Central America and Africa.⁶² UNHCR's activities between 2017-2018 have predominately been linked to synthesizing the CRRF's lessons learned and innovations within its application for the High Commissioner's proposed global compact on refugees.⁶³ The global compact on refugees has four key objectives, which include easing pressure placed on host states, enhancing the self-reliance of refugees, expanding third-country solutions access, and supporting states of origin to promote returnees' safety and dignity.⁶⁴ The compact's program of action splits into two categories: "arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing" and "areas in need of support."⁶⁵ It also establishes the Global Refugee Forum, an annual gathering to outline challenges, expand the number of involved actors, and report on the progress of the compact.⁶⁶

The other major guiding framework is UNHCR's *Strategic Directions 2017-2021*.⁶⁷ UNHCR outlines its "five core directions" – protect, respond, include, empower, and solve – in its pursuit to develop more comprehensive approaches outlined in the CRRF and the global compact.⁶⁸ UNHCR's work in 2018 has also included developing a global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration, expanding the protection of rights to encompass both refugees and traditional migrants.⁶⁹ The committee's 69th session will be held between 1-5 October 2018.⁷⁰

Conclusion

There is a growing need for long-term and systematic support for both refugees and their hosting communities.⁷¹ UNHCR's work in these areas exemplifies the 2030 Agenda's goal to encompass all and leave no one behind in the greater international agenda.⁷² Furthermore, durable solutions are the key for finding greater synergy between the humanitarian and development fields.⁷³ The CRRF and the proposed global compact on refugees are the first steps toward a more equitable and responsible approach to the protection of an ever-growing refugee population.⁷⁴

Annotated Bibliography

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This publication breaks down UNHCR's agenda between 2017-2021. After laying out the statistics and challenges currently facing refugees, the document outlines the body's declarations of work within its five core directions: protect, respond, include, empower, and solve. The last section, "Making it Work," provides details on the logistical and technological components needed in all five conceptual areas of focus. Delegates should use this source for a more concrete understanding of the UNHCR's goals and its plans to achieve them.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *The Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR Quick Guide*. Retrieved 8 September 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/5b6d574a7>

⁶² UNHCR, *CRRF Global Digital Portal*, 2018.

⁶³ UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2018, p. 11.

⁶⁴ UNHCR, *The Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR Quick Guide*, 2018, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2018, p. 10.

⁷⁰ UNHCR, *2018 Executive Committee Session*, 2018.

⁷¹ UNHCR, *Statement by UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi on World Refugee Day 2018*, 2018.

⁷² Wilton Park, *Forum on new approaches to protracted displacement*, 2016.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ UN General Assembly, Report of the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme: Report of the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/1176), 2017, p. 11.

UNHCR compiled this quick guide as a comprehensive reference outlining the work on the global compact for refugees. It delineates the historical steps leading up to the proposed compact released in July 2018. It also summarizes the essential components of the compact and how it will work upon its adoption at the General Assembly's seventy-third session. Delegates should use this source to ground their understanding of this monumental document so that they can utilize the framework in prospective resolutions. Delegates can find the link to the advanced version of the full global compact on refugees in the bibliography section.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *UNHCR Global Appeal 2018-2019*. Retrieved 7 August 2018 from:

http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2018/pdf/Global_Appeal_2018_full_lowres.pdf

UNHCR regularly produces its Global Appeal, and this document is the latest for the years 2018-2019. As a document geared primarily toward donors, it outlines the financial requirements of the body's work for the upcoming year. It also more specifically underlines the hurdles UNHCR and its partners face in their efforts to address humanitarian crises. Delegates should use this document to bolster their understanding of current UNHCR financial priorities and the challenges it faces in carrying out programs.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *UNHCR Global Report 2017*. Retrieved 6 July 2018 from:

http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2017/pdf/GR2017_English_Full_lowres.pdf

This annual report covers UNHCR's work completed in 2017. Following an overview of the year, the report includes regional summaries and thematic updates in sections "Responding with Lifesaving Support" and "Building Better Futures." This document reviews the responsibilities of UNHCR as well as the body's Global Strategic Priorities for 2016-2017. The report then provides detailed analysis on the body's most recent successes and areas of improvement. It is a vital document for delegates' understanding of the progress of UNHCR's ongoing efforts and the areas still requiring resolutions to challenges.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session. (2016). *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 6 July 2018 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/1>

This General Assembly resolution contains the New York Declaration, calling for the implementation of the CRRF and the development of a global compact on refugees to be headed by UNHCR. Delegates should use this document to understand the UN's position on refugee and migration issues, as well as a reference for the commitments to solidify a global approach to the growing numbers of refugees made by the General Assembly, and how the UNHCR will be instrumental in executing them. More specifically, it places the topic of refugee and migration populations within the context of the 2030 Agenda. Delegates can find details regarding the CRRF and the global compact in Annex 1 of the resolution.

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I. Providing Adequate Shelter for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Introduction

Forced displacement is a rising issue that currently affects 68.5 million people worldwide.⁷⁵ One of the main challenges facing forcibly displaced persons is access to adequate shelter in which their needs are being met.⁷⁶ In early 2018, 16.2 million people were newly displaced, an average of 44,440 per day.⁷⁷ Of the 68.5 million people currently displaced, 40 million are categorized as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 25.4 million as refugees.⁷⁸ Following the definition by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), IDPs are groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, violence, violations of human rights, or natural or artificial disasters, and have not crossed an international border.⁷⁹ A refugee is defined as someone who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”⁸⁰

One of UNHCR’s first points of action regarding displacement is providing some form of shelter to those affected by disasters or conflict.⁸¹ UNHCR has worked toward providing shelter needs to refugees since the Hungarian Revolution of 1955, which resulted in a large refugee crisis.⁸² Settling refugees in emergency housing in the beginning included not only establishing camps, but also the help of families in host states.⁸³ During UNHCR’s first crisis, refugees were moved from Hungary to over 30 different states on five continents.⁸⁴ This essentially set the precedent for the work UNHCR does within crises today, where one of its main goals is to provide adequate shelter for both refugees and IDPs in times of need.⁸⁵ UNHCR’s views shelter not only as a form of protection against harsh weather conditions, but also as a key to restoring dignity, self-sufficiency, and personal security.⁸⁶ Adequate shelter is more explicitly defined by UNHCR as a “habitable, covered living space providing a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity.”⁸⁷ To live in adequate shelter also means that, wherever a refugee or IDP decides to settle, he or she should have access to water systems, acquire local government permission to be there, and not suffer under the consequence of overcrowding.⁸⁸ There are many logistical and humanitarian considerations in providing adequate shelter for IDPs and refugees.⁸⁹ Some challenges include providing durable shelters in harsh weather conditions, appropriate shelter response for urban and rural areas, and accommodating all types of vulnerable populations.⁹⁰

International and Regional Framework

The right to adequate shelter was first outlined in 1948 through Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR).⁹¹ Additionally, Article 21 of the 1951 *Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* (Refugee Convention) grants refugees the same rights to housing as the citizens of

⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, 2017.

⁷⁶ UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2018.

⁷⁷ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, 2017.

⁷⁸ UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2017.

⁷⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Statistics – The World in Numbers*, 2018.

⁸⁰ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010.

⁸¹ UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2018.

⁸² UNHCR, *Yearbook of the United Nations 1956: Refugees*, 1956, p. 243.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁸⁴ UNHCR, *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Hungarian uprising and refugee crisis*, 2006.

⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2018.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ UNHCR, *Emergency Shelter Standard*, 2018.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

the host country.⁹² Furthermore, Article 11 of the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) reiterates the same idea of the right to adequate standards of living for all, including housing, and the right to continue working toward those adequate living conditions.⁹³

Expanding these standards to IDPs are the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (2004), specifically principle 18, which ensures the IDPs' right to move freely and choose their own housing, and re-emphasizes the importance of the standard on adequate housing set by UNHCR.⁹⁴ Under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on Human Rights produced the *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* (The Pinheiro Principles) in June 2005.⁹⁵ This document reiterated the points made in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* by further specifying refugees' and IDPs' rights to sustainable shelter, housing, and property restitution regardless of their status.⁹⁶ In addition, the Pinheiro Principles address important challenges in the provision of shelter, such as property ownership, shelter construction, and the insufficient inclusion of women and girls in shelter decision-making.⁹⁷ They also highlight the dangers of hazardous weather conditions, and encourage Member States and organizations like UNHCR to work towards the creation of solutions for more durable and sustainable shelters.⁹⁸

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda), adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015, works toward a more sustainable world via 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁹⁹ The topic of shelter falls under SDG 11 to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."¹⁰⁰ Specifically, target 11.3 of SDG 11 aims to ensure access to adequate housing to all peoples, whether they are living in slums in the developing world, or they are refugees searching for shelter.¹⁰¹ On 19 September 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration).¹⁰² This Declaration set out to improve the livelihood of refugees by creating a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and calling for a global compact on refugees.¹⁰³ The CRRF re-emphasizes not only UNHCR's commitment to providing refugees and IDPs adequate shelter, but also encourages Member States' agency through implementing the CRRF.¹⁰⁴ In October of 2016, Member States gathered in Quito, Ecuador to attend Habitat III, the third conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, to discuss the challenges faced with providing housing.¹⁰⁵ Through this conference, the *New Urban Agenda* was created, which addresses the need for sustainable urban development, and ensures the rights refugees and other displaced persons are being met regarding housing.¹⁰⁶ Each framework, convention, and report

⁹² UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010.

⁹³ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966, p. 4.

⁹⁴ UN OCHA, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 2004, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/17)*, 2005.

⁹⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*, 2005, p. 7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*, 2018.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016, p. 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ UN General Assembly, *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*, 2017, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

further clarify the imperative issues in meeting the standards of adequate shelter and ensuring vulnerable populations are not forgotten throughout the many different crises.¹⁰⁷

Role of the International System

UNHCR is at the forefront of providing shelter for refugees and IDPs since it is a fundamental component to its objective to provide immediate assistance in cases of emergency.¹⁰⁸ A main principle in UNHCR's emergency response regarding shelter is to consider the specific context of the crisis as there is no one universal shelter solution.¹⁰⁹ In 2017, UNHCR created an emergency response framework, referred to as the *UNHCR Emergency Handbook*.¹¹⁰ The framework outlines UNHCR's policies on emergency response regarding improvement of response timelines, provisions for shelter, and protection of vulnerable groups.¹¹¹ Vulnerable populations such as women, children, or the elderly have different needs that must be considered when providing shelter.¹¹² A current campaign UNHCR is working on to accommodate the specific needs of these populations is called "Nobody Left Outside," which is a campaign to raise funds for IDPs and refugees who are forcibly displaced.¹¹³ UNHCR has also created the Global Shelter Coalition, which brings companies and philanthropists together to help fund and create durable solutions to the refugee crises occurring throughout the world.¹¹⁴ UNHCR's *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)* (2014-2018 Global Strategy) aims to improve refugee living conditions through shelter solutions that are socio-economically secure and "provide privacy, security, protection from elements, and a sense of home."¹¹⁵ One suggested concept is a master planning process which aims to include host communities, humanitarian and development actors, governments, and affected populations in settlement planning and design.¹¹⁶

In 1992, the UN established the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as the primary coordination mechanism for humanitarian assistance.¹¹⁷ Along with UNHCR, the committee includes the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which provides materials such as metal sheets, blankets, and essential cooking items to families with children during emergencies.¹¹⁸ The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the International Organization on Migration (IOM) focus on the provision of necessary materials and assistance for building shelters.¹¹⁹ UNHCR also works closely with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).¹²⁰ IFRC and UNHCR co-lead the Global Shelter Cluster, an IASC coordination mechanism comprised of multiple shelter actors including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts, local and national governments, and donors.¹²¹ Within this partnership, IFRC focuses on natural disaster relief and emergency response, whereas UNHCR concentrates more on conflict-based displacement.¹²² A main objective for the cluster is to ensure adequate coordination between the governments they are working with and relevant NGOs.¹²³

¹⁰⁷ FAO, *Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons Implementing the 'Pinheiro Principles*, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ UNHCR, *How We Shelter*, 2018; UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹¹⁰ UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, 2017.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹¹³ UNHCR, *Nobody Left Outside*, 2018.

¹¹⁴ UNHCR, *Global Shelter Coalition*, 2018.

¹¹⁵ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹⁷ IASC, *IASC-Membership and Structure*, 2017.

¹¹⁸ UNICEF, *Shelter*, 2018.

¹¹⁹ IOM, *Shelter*, 2018.

¹²⁰ UNHCR, *The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*, 2018.

¹²¹ Shelter Cluster, *Global Shelter Cluster*, 2018.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Shelter Cluster, *Shelter and Settlements the Foundation of Humanitarian Response: Strategy 2018-2022*, 2014.

The Global Shelter Cluster focuses on the spaces into which refugees are moving, addressing the specifications of rural and urban settings as well as the subsequent needs of the displaced.¹²⁴

Regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) also provide assistance when it comes to shelter and settlements.¹²⁵ The EU helps specifically through the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, primarily through funding.¹²⁶ The European Commission has posted a set of guidelines, the *Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Guidelines*, in 2017 that outline a "people centered" approach of the EU with regard to funding, food assistance, and shelter and settlements.¹²⁷

Addressing Structural Challenges of Providing Adequate Shelter

Providing adequate shelter logistically requires not only having somewhere to live, but also addressing the challenges of the access to clean water, the risks of overcrowding such as disease outbreak, and the necessity of having durable shelters to withstand extreme weather conditions.¹²⁸ When providing shelter, UNHCR tailors its response by first assessing the location the agency will be working, regarding whether it is in an urban or rural setting.¹²⁹ There are two forms of shelter that refugees and IDPs access: dispersed or grouped settlement.¹³⁰ Dispersed settlement involves living with host families as well as rural or urban self-settlement, in which IDPs or refugees choose somewhere to settle without government or NGO assistance.¹³¹ In dispersed settlement, there is the possibility of eviction by landlords or the government if, for example, refugees have settled in an area without obtaining legal permission.¹³² Lacking permission from governments for using public space can further escalate an already sensitive issue.¹³³ Grouped settlement can include collective centers, planned camps, or self-settled camps.¹³⁴ For both refugees and IDPs, urban settlements involving collective centers are mostly located in areas such as gymnasiums, warehouses, community centers, and other buildings, which are not designed for sustainable living.¹³⁵ A major challenge for both methods of shelter provision within urban areas specifically is the limited availability of housing, often due to a physical lack of available land, forcing refugees and IDPs to settle in congested spaces or marginalized neighborhoods.¹³⁶ These neighborhoods have less access to basic services, and adding more people to the population further limits their resources.¹³⁷

As part of its 2014-2018 Global Strategy, UNHCR works toward measuring and correctly identifying the percentage of people who do not have adequate shelter.¹³⁸ Addressing adequate housing involves a myriad of factors, such as regulations for specific floor space in both warm and cold climates, and includes having access to cooking areas and supplies.¹³⁹ As outlined in the 2014-2018 Global Strategy, UNHCR aims to use existing resources from the area of settlement and ensure that shelter assistance is not just providing less-durable materials such as tents.¹⁴⁰ After assessing each situation as concretely and effectively as possible, durable solutions can include more traditional forms of housing such as dome

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹²⁵ European Commission, *Shelter and Settlements*, 2018.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ European Commission, *Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Guidelines*, 2017, p. 2.

¹²⁸ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ UNHCR, *Settlement in urban areas*, 2018.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² UNHCR, *Action Sheet 13: Shelter*, 2018, p. 270; UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 16.

¹³³ UNHCR, *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*, 2017.

¹³⁴ UNHCR, *Action Sheet 13: Shelter*, 2018, p. 1.

¹³⁵ UNHCR, *Settlement in urban areas*, 2018.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 31.

¹³⁹ UNHCR, *Settlement in urban areas*, 2018.

¹⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 1.

housing, huts, or even mud houses depending on climate and situation.¹⁴¹ One of the first sites of implementation was Ghana, where the UNHCR field office of the Takoradi provides assistance, including shelter materials and skill building, to three different settlement camps.¹⁴² Dealing with over 5,000 refugees and a lack of materials, field officers created a training camp for refugees who wanted to be involved in the planning process, resulting in a prototype program where refugees are taught vital skills for shelter building.¹⁴³ Simultaneously, UNHCR has been working on the development of a “master plan” concept, in which all affected groups would be included in the decision and planning process.¹⁴⁴ In Rwanda, UNHCR has partnered with both Stanford University and Ennead Architects on the development of the toolkit needed to complete this process, which culminated in the creation of a pilot of the master plan project and has subsequently helped set up a new settlement in Mugombwa.¹⁴⁵ The impact of this project on both the host community and the refugees is monitored, with the information gathered used to help implement the master plan concept in other crises.¹⁴⁶

As camps are one of the quickest and easiest ways to provide shelter for forcibly displaced persons, they have typically been used for emergencies such as the Rohingya or Syrian crises.¹⁴⁷ However, camps also come with their own set of problems to be addressed when thinking of longer-term solutions for refugees and IDPs.¹⁴⁸ Camps were intended as short-term solutions, seen first as a transitional placement during emergencies, yet recent statistics from 2017 showed about 31% of refugees were still living in camps after three years of being displaced.¹⁴⁹ Over-extended camp placements can be detrimental because, like other collective centers, the challenges in supplying proper sanitation, accessing relevant materials, ensuring individual privacy, and preventing security risks increase.¹⁵⁰ Other problems arise when structures within camps are made from non-durable or inadequate materials, leaving refugees and IDPs vulnerable to severe weather conditions.¹⁵¹

To address these challenges of group settlements and camps, UNHCR developed the Alternative to Camps policy.¹⁵² Key action areas of this policy are settlement and shelter responses that facilitate movement out of camps into long-term settlements, such as planned settlements or living with host families, as well as ensure concepts such as self-reliance and new skill development are included in shelter provision processes for refugees and IDPs.¹⁵³ Currently, most displaced persons live in settlement solutions known as “mixed settlements.”¹⁵⁴ In mixed settlements, a majority of refugees live in a combination of planned camps, transit sites, privately hosted living accommodations, or informal self-managed settlements.¹⁵⁵ Although not the most ideal of solutions, mixed settlements are one step away from camps to better provide shelter for both IDPs and refugees.¹⁵⁶

Meeting Individuals’ Shelter Needs

UNHCR ensures to pay special attention to vulnerable populations when addressing shelter needs.¹⁵⁷ Women, children, those with disabilities, and elderly persons all come with different sets of needs that are

¹⁴¹ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 24.

¹⁴² UNHCR, *Empowering refugees create housing solutions*, 2018.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*, 2017, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Alternatives to Camps*, 2018.

¹⁵¹ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹⁵² UNHCR, *Alternatives to Camps*, 2018.

¹⁵³ UNHCR, *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*, 2018, pp. 1, 8.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

not always met in camps, or other forms of shelter that UNHCR and its partners provide.¹⁵⁸ In some situations, children are the heads of their households.¹⁵⁹ These child-headed households are often at high risk of exploitation, violence, abuse, or even human trafficking.¹⁶⁰ In addition, the elderly as well as children might have difficulty creating and building their own shelters, or are forced to depend upon others to help them sustain their living arrangements.¹⁶¹ Depending on the materials from which the shelter is made, security risks can arise from improper and unsecure walls or the inability to lock doors.¹⁶² At times, shelters are simply made of tent material or metal sheets, and while it gives a type of covering, it is not ideal when it comes to security.¹⁶³ All of these factors increase vulnerable groups' risks of harassment, exploitation, or assault, and can negatively impact their mental and emotional well-being.¹⁶⁴

It is imperative to assess whether UNHCR's shelter standards are being met to protect vulnerable populations.¹⁶⁵ One of the nine 2014-2018 Guiding Principles is age, gender, and diversity, which is mindful of respecting the rights and needs of all people, of all ages and sex.¹⁶⁶ This is important as UNHCR aims to implement these principles during the shelter process.¹⁶⁷ The Alternative to Camps policy also works to find solutions that are inclusive of the diversity of displaced persons, can help refugees and IDPs with the transition of living in an unfamiliar place, and so decrease the possibility of conflict with host populations.¹⁶⁸ The camp coordination initiative headed by the IASC strives to ensure women and girls are empowered throughout the process of providing access to adequate shelter.¹⁶⁹ The main objective for this initiative is to coordinate roles and responsibilities with individuals who will be conscious of the needs of both women and men, as well as adopt community-based approaches to challenges in camp situations.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, the UNHCR *Handbook on the Protection of Women and Girls* includes objectives to identify women and girls who need shelter assistance and to increase their participation in the constructing or organizing of shelter.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, those who have been victims of gender-based or other forms of violence have the right to confidential shelter locations that serve to protect them from potential offenders or avoid stigmas that could be harmful and detrimental.¹⁷²

An important objective of the 2014-2018 Global Strategy is to ensure the type of housing offered allows refugees and IDPs to feel empowered to "build their own shelter."¹⁷³ This is meant to foster self-sustainability and to have a positive impact on the well-being of those in camps.¹⁷⁴ Such community empowerment includes refugees and affected populations in the development of settlements and shelter processes, enabling better assessment of the needs all those who are displaced.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, UNHCR's contingency plans, executed by its regional offices together with local governments, are meant to foster community engagement and cooperation between refugees and host populations by ensuring both groups are considered in settlement plans.¹⁷⁶

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ UNHCR, *Alternatives to Camps*, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ IASC, *Women, Girls, Boys, and Men: Different Needs Equal Opportunities*, 2006, p. 15.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁷¹ UNHCR, *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 2006, pp. 96, 111.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁷³ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018)*, 2014, p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

Case Study: The Rohingya Crisis

The crisis in Myanmar with the Rohingya refugee population has grown at an exponential rate in the past few years.¹⁷⁷ The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group fleeing Myanmar due to violent persecution based on their religious identity.¹⁷⁸ The largest exodus of the Rohingya Muslims was in August 2017, when 723,000 people were forced to flee their homes, the majority to Bangladesh.¹⁷⁹ As the situation continues to escalate, spontaneous shelters have appeared, causing an increased worry over structural challenges relating to the durability of shelters and safety within the previously residing community.¹⁸⁰ The Kutupalong refugee settlement in the Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has become the largest of its kind with more than 600,000 people living in an area of about 13 square kilometers.¹⁸¹ This proves difficult in providing adequate shelter, basic services, water sanitation, and ensuring the safety of vulnerable populations, as overcrowding and a lack of durable materials pose a serious challenge.¹⁸² Another rising challenge is the increasing safety risks for the Rohingya because the area where most have settled is prone to monsoon flooding and landslides.¹⁸³ With more refugees fleeing to Bangladesh, the number of people who are at risk of these landslides only continues to increase.¹⁸⁴

Recently, UNHCR appealed to increase the funding for emergency response in Bangladesh from March to December of 2018.¹⁸⁵ The supplementary appeal identified 1.3 million people who are in need of assistance, 80% of which are women and children.¹⁸⁶ With regard to adequate shelter, it found that about 31% of shelters have some kind of vulnerability, such as a lack of walls or inadequate materials, which puts the Rohingya refugees at risk.¹⁸⁷ The appeal had originally asked for \$238.8 to fund assistance for the Rohingya crisis.¹⁸⁸ However, as of early August 2018, only 44% of the needed extra funding had been allocated.¹⁸⁹ These funds are extremely important as they are meant to help build durable shelters able to withstand flooding or landslides.¹⁹⁰

Similar to other emergency situations, UNHCR's primary action concerning shelter for the Rohingya has been to first provide shelter kits, as a part of the emergency preparedness.¹⁹¹ It has then assumed work to upgrade shelters to ensure that they are meeting the standards of living set by UNHCR.¹⁹² The third phase of their projects has been focused on ensuring that these shelters are able to withstand the rainy season in Bangladesh.¹⁹³ As of July 2018, 688 shelters were damaged during the monsoon season, affecting roughly 14,000 Rohingya refugees and 3,000 households.¹⁹⁴ UNHCR has managed to replace or repair 640 of those shelters that were damaged, while another 1,505 households were relocated.¹⁹⁵ Recently, the Secretary-General and the president of the World Bank Group visited the camps to observe and discuss the situation with those living in it, and to assess what further needs remained regarding the Rohingya situation.¹⁹⁶ While moving forward in solving this crisis, it is important to consider not only the

¹⁷⁷ UNHCR, *Rohingya Emergency*, 2018.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Myanmar Refugee Emergency Response in Bangladesh*, 2018, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ UNHCR, *Operation Update: Bangladesh*, 2017, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ UNHCR, *Myanmar Refugee Emergency Response in Bangladesh*, 2018, p. 11.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ UNHCR, *Operation Update: Bangladesh*, 2017, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ UNHCR, *Monsoon rains highlight needs of Rohingya refugees*, 2018.

financial need to build durable shelters, but also to implement ideas regarding the safety of those being affected, while being mindful of the continuing trend of individuals having to flee.¹⁹⁷

Conclusion

Although many improvements have been made regarding shelter, UNHCR and their partners still have important work to do to address all shelter needs.¹⁹⁸ UNHCR must continuously be mindful of not only providing adequate shelter, but should also keep in mind the living standards of both refugees and IDPs.¹⁹⁹ Currently, UNHCR is facing both structural and humanitarian challenges with regard to shelters, including providing durable shelters that can withstand hazardous conditions, preventing overcrowding in camps, and ensuring vulnerable populations are not forgotten.²⁰⁰ The inclusion of vulnerable populations such as women, children, and the elderly in the decision-making and planning process is still an issue that currently needs to be worked on in terms of safety and durability of shelters being built.²⁰¹ Although camps are one of the fastest ways to provide shelter, finding different options is beneficial as the individual needs of each displaced person can be more easily met.²⁰² Although both the UNHCR Alternative to Camps policy and the 2014-2018 Global Strategy are making progress toward addressing durability and safety challenges, through inclusive policies and durable shelter ideas, further work can still be done.²⁰³

Further Research

Moving forward on this topic, delegates should consider the following questions: What can Member States do regarding refugees and IDPs in both urban and rural shelter situations, especially with regard to access to water, sanitation, and other vital necessities? In what other ways can UNHCR improve shelters in camps? What is needed to create shelters that will withstand harsh weather conditions? How can the Alternative to Camps policy be expanded and better implemented? Are there ways to improve the living conditions of those who live in camps? How can the international community help vulnerable populations at risk of abuse or exploitation due to lack of adequate shelter?

Annotated Bibliography

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2006). *Women, Girls, Boys, and Men Different Needs – Equal Opportunities* [Report]. Retrieved 9 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/women/50f91c999/iasc-gender-handbook-humanitarian-action.html>

This report provides specific information on the equal inclusion of the needs of women, girls, boys, and men when it comes to shelter solutions. As ensuring the rights of women refugees and IDPs has been a continuous struggle, this document can serve well as a baseline for new ideas regarding women, girls, and other vulnerable populations and their shelter needs. The document highlights the issues that vulnerable populations face, such as higher safety risks or risks of exploitation, and points to their specific needs that are often not being met. Delegates should use this document as a focal point for reflecting on gender equality as they do their research on equal inclusion in the shelter process.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2014). *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter*. Retrieved 1 August 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/livelihoods/530f13aa9/global-strategy-settlement-shelter.html>

The Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter is a comprehensive work that looks at different strategies to help refugees settle in a sustainable manner. The Global Strategy

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ UNHCR, *Shelter Solutions*, 2015.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2018.

²⁰¹ IASC, *Women, Girls, Boys, and Men: Different Needs Equal Opportunities*, 2006.

²⁰² UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2018.

²⁰³ Ibid.

has nine guiding principles as its main driving force that are to be used by UNHCR as well as by Member States when providing shelter. Some of these include gender inclusivity and community participation. Delegates should use this strategy to assess the type of work UNHCR is trying to implement regarding refugees and settlement, while being mindful of all populations affected by the wide variety of crises.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2014). *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*. Retrieved 7 July 2018 from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5423ded84.html>

This document provides information on the policy UNHCR follows within its Alternatives to Camps initiative. It begins by giving reasons for a new policy, introducing new types of shelter for refugees and IDPs. A focus of this document is providing shelter in urban areas for refugees, as this kind of settlement comes with its own set of problems including often lacking access to running water. It also delves into the different forms of implementing the Alternative to Camps policy in a sustainable manner. One of the main concerns for UNHCR is the environmental implications that camps can have, and this document therefore addresses some of those issues as a major challenge to finding adequate alternatives for camps. Delegates should use this resource to come up with own ideas on alternatives to camps.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2015). *Shelter Solutions* [Website]. Retrieved 7 July 2018 from: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/111688/shelter-solutions>

The Emergency Handbook on Shelter Solutions provides a comprehensive look on the necessary actions and tools to provide shelter in times of emergency. It underscores key points such as adequate shelter materials and tools needed in emergency response. The handbook further addresses standards and objectives for protection and the key areas, in which UNHCR wants to improve its own procedures in reaction to crises. A major area of concern for the handbook is the family tent, which is meant to provide adequate shelter for refugees and IDPs as a short-term solution. Delegates should use this source to understand the role UNHCR has regarding shelter during emergencies.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2018). *Nobody Left Outside* [Website]. Retrieved 7 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/nobody-left-outside.html>

This website provides information on the Nobody Left Outside Initiative UNHCR aims to complete. The website addresses the ideals with which UNHCR works to implement adequate shelter for vulnerable populations. Moreover, it gives background information on how UNHCR provides shelter, the geographical areas in which it works, as well as the progress made and information on funding disbursement. The website also offers information on the Global Shelter Coalition, which works toward advocacy, innovation, efficiency, and the protection of the environment regarding shelter needs. Delegates should use this source to understand the need for continued funding when it comes to UNHCR and their efforts on shelter, and as a concrete example of UNHCR's work.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2017). *Rohingya Emergency* [Website]. Retrieved 16 August 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/rohingya-emergency.html>

As the Rohingya emergency is one of the fastest growing refugee crises in the world, this site is extremely beneficial for delegates' practical understanding of the problem. It details not only recent events and the related news and stories, but also gives a brief history on the situation. This website is also very helpful for delegates when looking at what has been done and on what needs to be improved regarding shelter specifically in the Rohingya refugee emergency.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2017). *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternative to Camps* [Report]. Retrieved 7 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/59b2a6f07>

This document is meant to be used as a tool in finding alternatives to camps. Published in 2017, it addresses different settlement options, contingency planning, legal issues, advocacy, and security. It further discusses significant issues UNHCR is aiming to focus on with its Alternative to Camps initiative. As part of the solution, the document highlights

the importance of community planning and development planning. By reading this report, delegates will learn why both of these processes are relevant and important in moving forward with providing adequate shelter to refugees and IDPs.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2018). *How We Shelter* [Website]. Retrieved 7 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/how-we-shelter.html>

The How We Shelter website gives information on how UNHCR provides shelter. The website is beneficial for information on recent developments regarding shelter projects. It has also begun spotlighting different Member States and their specific shelter solutions to crises. Currently the focus is on Rwanda and their dual shelter initiative, an important innovation regarding shelter. Along with giving some information on how UNHCR works to provide shelter, this site can be beneficial to delegates as they do research on their assigned Member States. It will also help them come up with new ideas on how shelters could be built more effectively and sustainably.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2018). *Shelter* [Website]. Retrieved 7 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/shelter.html>

This website serves as the main site for information on UNHCR's work with shelter. It involves current and relevant information on the projects UNHCR is working on regarding shelter, and the challenges that come with them. It also presents examples of projects in urban areas, the Alternative to Camps agenda, as well as UNHCR's role in these shelter processes. The site also has links to stories and news that are relevant to shelter and refugees, which can be useful to delegates as they delve into research on why providing adequate shelter is important. Delegates should use this site to foster their understanding of the shelter processes that UNHCR undergoes and the foundations of UNHCR's work.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. (2018). *UNHCR Statistics - The World in Numbers* [Website]. Retrieved 1 August 2018 from: <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>

This source is an interactive website that has the most up-to-date information on refugees and IDPs. It has data on not only the current number of refugees and IDPs but also information on where they are situated. The data also shows how the number of crises, refugees, and IDPs has increased over the last few years. Delegates should utilize this informational website as they research current developments and relevant statistics to help develop their arguments and positions on the current situation of refugees and IDPs and their needs regarding shelter.

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II. Supporting Sustainable Return and Reintegration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Introduction

Since 1946, when the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolution 62 (I)-I, “Refugees and Displaced Persons,” the UN has recognized the need to assist in the return and reintegration of refugees to their countries of origin as a durable solution to forced displacement.²⁰⁴ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) leads the UN’s efforts, assistance, programs, and initiatives in this regard and expanded its work to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2003.²⁰⁵ According to the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951), refugees are persons who have left “their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order.”²⁰⁶ IDPs are people forced to leave their homes and move across their own country as a result of violence, conflict, or natural or human-made disasters.²⁰⁷

For UNHCR, the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs is the most desirable solution for both groups.²⁰⁸ According to international refugee law, return is a fundamental right of all refugees, but the decision to return should be voluntary in nature, meaning that no one can force refugees to return to their countries of origin.²⁰⁹ Return and reintegration can be organized, in coordination with host countries and UNCHR, or spontaneous, when refugees and IDPs return by their own means.²¹⁰ Once refugees return to their countries of origin, they are no longer refugees and are, instead, returnees.²¹¹

Reintegration occurs immediately after return and is the process that enables returnees to regain all their rights and capacities to participate, work, and live within their communities of origin without fearing any type of discrimination.²¹² Clause 29 of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) recognizes that, even though IDPs and refugees are different in nature, facilitating their return and reintegration contributes to the transition from conflict to a durable peace as well as sustainable development in their countries and communities of origin.²¹³ In order to achieve effective return and reintegration, countries of origin are called to demonstrate their political will and commitment to help their displaced communities.²¹⁴ When national capacities to protect the rights and interests of returnees are fully restored, effective return and reintegration can happen.²¹⁵

²⁰⁴ UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Displaced Persons: Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, and Agreement on Interim Measures to be Taken in Respect of Refugees and Displaced Person (A/RES/62(I)-I)*, 1946, p. 98.

²⁰⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR’s Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)*, 2008, p.1; UNHCR, *Voluntary Repatriation*, 2018.

²⁰⁶ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

²⁰⁷ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 202.

²⁰⁸ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 182; Entwisle, *The end of the road? A review of UNHCR’s role in the return and reintegration of internally displaced populations (PDES/2010/09)*, 2010.

²⁰⁹ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

²¹⁰ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 205.

²¹¹ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

²¹² UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 204.

²¹³ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²¹⁴ UNHCR, *Voluntary Repatriation*, 2018.

²¹⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR’s Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)*, 2008, p. 6.

International and Regional Framework

Article 33 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* acknowledge return as right for all refugees.²¹⁶ Article 33 of the latter introduced the principle of *non-refoulement*, which states that Parties to the Convention shall not expel or obligate refugees to return involuntarily to their countries of origin since this might represent a threat to their life and freedoms.²¹⁷ The Convention also implies that return, also known as repatriation, can only happen once the fear of persecution has ceased.²¹⁸

This *Cairo Programme of Action* (1994) encourages states to strengthen by all possible means the development of international assistance for the effective return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.²¹⁹ Hence, it suggests that Member States adopt political provisions for refugees' return and reintegration.²²⁰ These provisions can include programmes for providing rehabilitation assistance to returnees and the creation of long-term reconstruction and development policies for building more inclusive and sustainable societies.²²¹

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed themselves to 17 goals to improve the quality of lives of all persons, including refugees and IDPs.²²² More specifically, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8, 10, and 11 seek to construct societies that are more inclusive for vulnerable communities, including refugees and IDPs.²²³ Following this, in 2016 the report of the Secretary-General, A/70/59 called upon states to cooperate toward effective action for assisting refugees and potential returnees.²²⁴ The Secretary-General's recommendations include developing interstate cooperation at the regional and global levels, improving their screening procedures for awarding both temporary and definite asylum or facilitating return, and coordinating international humanitarian assistance so that it can be distributed efficiently and effectively for strengthening the capacities of refugees, host communities, and returnees.²²⁵

Complementarily, in 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* and the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF).²²⁶ In the Declaration, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to enhance the refugee protection regime, respect their rights, and provide sustainable support aiming to reach durable solutions, including return and reintegration, all based on the SDGs guidelines.²²⁷ The New York Declaration expressed the need to support the construction of conditions in countries of origin necessary for refugees and IDPs to return in safety and dignity.²²⁸ These conditions include: the creation of guarantees for returnees to have the same access to rights as other citizens, and the creation of social, political, and economic incentives for reintegration.²²⁹ Finally, the Declaration also requested the creation of two Global Compacts to be adopted during the 73rd

²¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A(III))*, 1948; UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

²¹⁷ UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

²¹⁸ UNHCR, *Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection Handbook*, 1996.

²¹⁹ UN ICPD, *Cairo Programme of Action*, 1994, p. 115.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²²² UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ UN General Assembly, *In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants: Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/59)*, 2016, pp. 3-26.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 38.

session of the General Assembly in 2018.²³⁰ Member States have demonstrated their interest in improving the management of return and reintegration with the adoption of the Global Compact.²³¹

At the regional level, Article II of the African Union's (AU) *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (1969) endorses the principles of *non-refoulement* and voluntariness, and acknowledges the responsibility that both countries of origin and host countries have to cooperate in order to guarantee a safe return.²³² This Convention also includes of the principle of *non-penalization*, which means not criminalizing or starting legal prosecution against returnees for having left their country.²³³ The Organization of American States' (OAS) *Cartagena Declaration of Refugees* (1984) also endorses these principles and includes family reunification as a fundamental principle.²³⁴ The European Commission approved in 2015 the *European Agenda on Migration*, which is the current framework of action on migration, including displacement.²³⁵ This Agenda emphasizes that the protection of refugees demands international responsibility and highlights the primary task of UNHCR to identify whether refugees are able to return to their countries of origin.²³⁶

Role of the International System

UNHCR plays a key role in facilitating effective return and reintegration processes. In response to a lack of synchronized action across the UN system in its refugee response in the 1990s, General Assembly resolution 46/182 (1992) created the UNHCR-led Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).²³⁷ UNHCR chairs and sponsors different IASC commissions and thus significantly contributes to and coordinates the cooperation among UN humanitarian agencies for enhancing return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees.²³⁸ It also facilitates, in partnership with countries of origin, the creation of the necessary conditions that permit a return in safety and dignity.²³⁹ As the leader of IASC, UNHCR coordinates cooperation among relevant stakeholders to assist refugees from Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Libya, and Venezuela, among others.²⁴⁰ Most of UNHCR's actions addressing return and reintegration are based on the *Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection Handbook* (1996).²⁴¹ This document represents a set of guidelines for all repatriation operations and explains how the 4Rs approach (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction) and the principles of international refugee law should be applied.²⁴² It also provides valuable information for the management of return and reintegration, not only for UNHCR's staffers, but also for governments and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners working in these areas.²⁴³ It further provides a wide variety of practical approaches for the protection of refugees and IDPs seeking voluntary repatriation amid large-scale refugee situations.²⁴⁴

In addition to the Handbook guidelines, UNHCR bases its actions on the 4Rs, which were first included in UNHCR's *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern* (2003) and expanded

²³⁰ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² OAU, *Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (CAB/LEG/24.3)*, 1969.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ OAS, *Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*, 1984, p. 4.

²³⁵ European Commission, *European Agenda on Migration*, 2015, p. 4.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations (A/RES/46/182)*, 1991.

²³⁸ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)*, 2008, p.5.

²³⁹ IASC, *About IASC*.

²⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection Handbook*, 1996, p. 7.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.13.

in the *Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy* (2018).²⁴⁵ The 4Rs approach seeks to connect all four processes in order to promote durable solutions for refugees, reduce poverty levels within returnees' communities, and help to create good local governance for the benefit of returnees.²⁴⁶ UNHCR's *Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy* also emphasizes the importance of working within an extended partnership and multi-stakeholder perspective, which should incorporate not only international organizations and agencies but also NGOs, community-based organizations, and civil society.²⁴⁷

For all these initiatives, UNHCR works alongside other UN agencies such as the UN Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as the World Bank. UNDP works with UNHCR and states to address the root causes of displacement, support return, and enhance reintegration.²⁴⁸ UNICEF works permanently with UNHCR by providing in-field assistance for child refugees and IDPs since they are a vulnerable population.²⁴⁹ An example of this is the case of South Sudan, where UNICEF assisted IDPs and returnees by providing them with access to shelter, water, and temporary learning facilities.²⁵⁰ WFP, the World Bank, and other institutions work similarly in order to support UNHCR's role in return and reintegration by providing food assistance, funds, and other types of humanitarian assistance.²⁵¹

Promoting Return as a Durable Solution

Supporting return as a durable solution is one of UNHCR's key goals for 2018-2019.²⁵² UNHCR underscores that voluntary return provides returnees with the opportunity to recover not only their economic, social, and political rights, but also their land, wells, and other properties.²⁵³ UNHCR works to support refugees and IDPs "to return voluntarily in safety and dignity in situations where conditions permit."²⁵⁴ For example, UNHCR, aiming to facilitate return for refugees and IDPs from Myanmar, has requested the government to provide the following guarantees for a safe return: a definite end to violence; a restoration of safety and security for all citizens; clear progress on rights and citizenship for all; and, inclusive development for all the displaced people of the Rakhine State.²⁵⁵ According to UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic, as of October 2018, the conditions in the Rakhine State of Myanmar are not conducive for a safe return of the Rohingya refugees.²⁵⁶

UNHCR works in partnership with the governments of origin and host countries in order to facilitate the creation of conditions for return, as it has done with the creation of the *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees* (SSAR).²⁵⁷ In 2012, UNHCR and the Swiss government hosted a conference for the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.²⁵⁸ This conference led to the creation of the SSAR, a multi-year framework that seeks to identify and implement durable solutions and facilitate technical and in-field assistance to host countries.²⁵⁹ The SSAR pursues five key objectives, all of them for refugees and returnees and led by UNHCR: support voluntary repatriation; warrant access to shelter and essential

²⁴⁵ UNHCR, *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, 2003, p. 17; UNHCR, *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy* (EC/59/SC/CRP.5), 2008, p. 5.

²⁴⁶ UNHCR, *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, 2003, p. 19.

²⁴⁷ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy* (EC/59/SC/CRP.5), 2008, p. 36.

²⁴⁸ UNDP, *UNHCR and UNDP urge tangible progress to improve conditions in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, 2018.

²⁴⁹ UNICEF, *UNICEF assists returnees to South Sudan with shelter, water and temporary learning facilities*, 2011.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ WFP, *Food Assistance for Refugees*, 2007.

²⁵² UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 182.

²⁵³ McCallin, *In defense of the alien*, 1989, p. 105.

²⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 182.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁵⁶ UNHCR, *UNHCR deep concern at return of Myanmar nationals from India to Myanmar*, 2018.

²⁵⁷ UNHCR, *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries*, 2016, p. 4.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

social services; facilitate improved livelihood opportunities and food security; warrant social and environmental protection; and provide capacity development for national authorities, associations, organizations, and communities.²⁶⁰

In order to achieve these objectives, UNHCR, with the assistance of more than 50 humanitarian partners, UN agencies, and other stakeholders, facilitated an unprecedented support to Afghanistan and host countries.²⁶¹ As a means of achieving Objective 1 of the SSAR on addressing return and reintegration, UNHCR facilitated the construction of the Afghan Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme in 2012.²⁶² This Programme became a relevant guideline for the Afghan government and allowed, along with the recommendations provided by UNHCR, the implementation of policies targeting the attainment of necessary conditions for effective return and reintegration of all refugees and IDPs.²⁶³ In Afghanistan, the main goal was to immediately create these conditions in order to improve the standards of living in 48 communities of origin so that this could guarantee for all returnees an effective reintegration.²⁶⁴

In order to facilitate voluntary return when conditions are favorable, UNHCR delivers accessible information to refugees about the existing conditions for return.²⁶⁵ In Iran, for example, UNHCR works with the Iranian government to provide all Afghan refugees with information about the existing facilities in their country.²⁶⁶ This information includes the mechanisms and procedures that refugees have to follow in order for them to opt for voluntary repatriation.²⁶⁷ All this information is widely distributed by UNHCR staffers and governmental institutions on flyers and bulletins and in information centers.²⁶⁸ In Pakistan, UNHCR also provides information to refugees about the existing facilities in Afghanistan and the procedures to follow in order to return.²⁶⁹ Some community-based consultative meetings, called *Shuras*, take place and gather members of the government, UNHCR, civil society, and refugees in order to promote a voluntary and well-informed return.²⁷⁰

UNHCR's participation is also important for registration management and logistics since it provides shelter, basic needs, medical care, and transportation services for returnees.²⁷¹ It also creates Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs) for voluntary return. In Pakistan, VRCs are in charge of facilitating informed decisions of voluntary return.²⁷² There, UNHCR has assisted more than 13,000 refugees seeking voluntary repatriation.²⁷³ Additionally, VRC personnel interview possible-returnees and remove them from refugee registration lists as long as they proceed to reintegration processes.²⁷⁴ In Iran, UNHCR contributed to the creation of a health clinic in Dogharoun, near the border, where, as of 2014, more than 3,278 refugees have benefited prior to their return.²⁷⁵ All these actions are implemented in cooperation with other UN agencies such as UNDP, the International Labor Organization, and the World Health Organization.²⁷⁶

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ UNHCR, *Afghan Solutions Strategy*, 2018.

²⁶² UNHCR, *The Voluntary Return & Reintegration Programme*, 2012, p. 2.

²⁶³ UNHCR, *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees: Progress Report*, 2014, p. 5.

²⁶⁴ UNHCR, *The Voluntary Return & Reintegration Programme*, 2012, p. 2.

²⁶⁵ UNHCR, *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees: Progress Report*, 2014, pp. 2-13.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁷⁶ UNHCR, *The Voluntary Return & Reintegration Programme*, 2012, p. 2.

Fostering Reintegration

Return and reintegration are interrelated processes. Reintegration is the continuation of return, and both need to be strategically managed in order to reach post-conflict durable stability and peace in the places of refugees' and IDPs' origins.²⁷⁷ For UNHCR, return and reintegration is not a simple reversal of displacement, but rather a dynamic process that affects all the members of a community affected by forced displacement.²⁷⁸ For UNHCR, reintegration's ultimate goal is the disappearance of social, political, economic, and legal differences between returnees and other residents, and to provide equal access to services, productive assets, and opportunities.²⁷⁹ UNHCR regularly invites Member States to work toward the sustainability of reintegration by progressively reducing returnees' dependence on international contributions and assistance.²⁸⁰ Thus, in order to achieve effective reintegration, states are called to develop sustainable habitats and societies with the ability to perform an efficient transition from conflict to peace.²⁸¹

UNHCR also seeks to use reintegration to promote conflict relief and development through the creation of more resilient communities with empowered and self-sufficient citizens.²⁸² In the short-term, financial assistance is necessary, and for this reason UNHCR provides returnees with Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs).²⁸³ CBIs deliver cash grants to returnees to enable them to afford their basic expenses and, consequently, access to basic services such as food, shelter, water, and medicine.²⁸⁴ As a means to ensure the effectiveness of CBIs, UNHCR facilitates coordinated operations between host countries and countries of origin, seeking to improve the mechanisms of evaluation and analysis on how these interventions might be implemented.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, CBIs are temporary, and UNHCR maintains that CBIs will be complementary mechanisms of support; otherwise, it would generate a sense of dependence in returnees and might inhibit them from self-sustainability.²⁸⁶ The main objective, consequently, is that returnees will not depend exclusively; in the mid and long-term, on international assistance.²⁸⁷

UNHCR has expressed that it is necessary for countries of origin to implement projects and initiatives with a holistic scope of action that involves legal, economic, social, cultural, civil, and political mechanisms of reintegration.²⁸⁸ In order to reach its 2018-2019 goals for improving reintegration, UNHCR aims to develop systematic multi-year and multi-partner strategies with national authorities, development partners, and other relevant stakeholders such as NGOs and civil society actors for the management of reintegration.²⁸⁹ These strategies are currently executed in six different operations in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Tanzania.²⁹⁰

Additionally, UNHCR is working to deliver clear information to returnees about the facilities for their effective reintegration.²⁹¹ These processes include the development of mechanisms for monitoring, registration, and supervision of returnees' progress toward reintegration.²⁹² UNHCR also advocates for the establishment of multilateral agreements among all involved parties in the process of return and

²⁷⁷ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)*, 2008, pp. 5-7.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁷⁹ UNHCR, *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, 2004, p. 5.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁸² UNHCR, *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)*, 2008, p. 6.

²⁸³ UNHCR, *Cash-Based Interventions*, 2018.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 182; UNHCR, *Policy on Cash-Based Interventions*, 2016, pp. 3-4

²⁸⁶ UNHCR, *Cash-Based Interventions*, 2018.

²⁸⁷ UNHCR, *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, 2004, Module 4, p. 6.

²⁸⁸ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 177.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

²⁹⁰ UNHCR, *Multi-Year Pilots Promoting Solutions 2016-2019*, 2016.

²⁹¹ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 182.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

reintegration.²⁹³ Tripartite agreements, signed between UNHCR and the governments of both the country of origin and the host country, have been particularly effective in providing a comprehensive framework for joint action.²⁹⁴ The *Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the I.R. of Pakistan, the Government of the I.R. of Afghanistan, and the UNHCR, Governing the Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan*, adopted in 2007 in Islamabad, is an example of this.²⁹⁵ This agreement created the Tripartite Commission to facilitate voluntary return from Pakistan and reintegration in Afghanistan.²⁹⁶ Following the same path, in 2013 Kenya, Somalia, and UNHCR adopted a tripartite agreement seeking to improve the mechanisms of cooperation for return and reintegration of Somali refugees.²⁹⁷ Tripartite agreements can also be signed between the country of origin, UNHCR, and another UN agency, as in the case of the *Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR with UNDP and Myanmar* (2018).

Effectiveness in reintegration processes may also depend on the political will of governments to include initiatives that provide returnees with incentives to stay in their countries despite the possibility of secondary displacement in which, a returnee decides to emigrate for a second time.²⁹⁸ Some of these national actions can include mechanisms for conflict resolution, initiatives for improving transnational security, policies for the restitution of lands, and the strengthening of programs for labor reinsertion, entrepreneurial loans, access to education and healthcare systems, civil registration, development infrastructure, and a more inclusive system for political participation and decision-making.²⁹⁹ In order to achieve this, governments are called to work jointly and follow already existing frameworks and approaches to reintegration such as UNHCR's *Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy*, which prioritizes the multi-stakeholders approach for cooperation.³⁰⁰ States might also follow the *UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* and its recommendations for the effective achievement of the 4Rs approach.³⁰¹

Conclusion

Today the world faces “the highest levels of displacement on record.”³⁰² More than 68.5 million people have left their homes due to violence; 24.4 million of them hold refugee status, and another 3.1 million are still seeking asylum.³⁰³ As of 2017, 30.6 million people have been forced to leave their homes.³⁰⁴ Today's conflicts and their effects on civilian populations have contributed to these large-scale migrations; therefore, the need for global support for protecting and assisting refugees and IDPs is urgent.³⁰⁵ Return and reintegration constitute two durable solutions for these refugees and IDPs and are essential for the achievement of the transition from conflict to peace. Moreover, effective return and reintegration contributes to the reconstruction and sustainable development of societies harmed by conflict, which in turn promotes improved standards of living and human rights for returnees and the entire community.³⁰⁶ For these reasons, UNHCR is highly committed to developing more and stronger mechanisms of cooperation among Member States toward the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.³⁰⁷

²⁹³ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 177.

²⁹⁴ UNHCR, *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, 2004, p. 10.

²⁹⁵ UNHCR et al., *Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the I.R. of Pakistan, the Government of the I.R. of Afghanistan, and the UNHCR Governing the Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan*, 2007.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ UNHCR et al., *Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kenya, the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and the UNHCR*, 2013.

²⁹⁸ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2017, p. 177.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 177-179.

³⁰⁰ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)*, 2008, p. 4.

³⁰¹ UNHCR, *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, 2004, pp.1-7

³⁰² UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2018.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ IDMC, *The Global Displacement Landscape*, 2017.

³⁰⁵ UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2018.

³⁰⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

Further Research

As delegates work to try to meet the current needs for supporting return and reintegration of large-scale movements of refugees and IDPs, they should consider questions such as: How can the international community cooperate with countries of origin to build the necessary conditions for return? How can Member States innovate the current mechanisms for return and reintegration in order to improve the social, political, and economic conditions of returnees? How do all these processes benefit vulnerable groups such as women and children? How can UNHCR improve its mechanisms of response to the effects of large-scale transnational mobilization? What kind of programs or initiatives are necessary for a better understanding of this situation?

Annotated Bibliography

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (1996). *Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection Handbook*. Geneva. Retrieved 6 August 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/afr/3bfe68d32.pdf>

This document provides technical guidance to the personnel and Member State specialists working in the field of repatriation, principally in the case of large-scale situations. It also includes relevant elements that explain the mandate of UNHCR and its role in return, repatriation, and reintegration processes. It also explains a wide range of activities, practices, and approaches for the management of return and reintegration. This handbook will help delegates gain a full and better understanding of how the international system and principally UNHCR have managed flows of refugees and returnees.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2003). *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*. Retrieved 9 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/partners/3f1408764/framework-durable-solutions-refugees-persons-concern.html>

This document includes important information related to the procedures that UNHCR follows in order to address forced displacement. In section 3 this document offers a general understanding of the 4Rs approach and technical recommendations on how this approach can be applied. Delegates can use these recommendations to understand the technical effectiveness of this approach and the facilities that it can provide given today's new displacement trends. It will be useful as delegates create solutions aligned with the current actions led by UNHCR on return and reintegration.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2004). *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*. Retrieved 9 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/411786694.pdf>

This handbook is relevant for understanding how UNHCR staff operate in scenarios of return and reintegration. This handbook contains the proposal of the High Commissioner for the implementation and understanding of the 4Rs approach as well as its anticipated needs and challenges. Part A seeks to provide a general context and theoretical understanding of return and reintegration, while part B addresses planning and implementation of actions and resources destined to repatriation and reintegration, and part C contributes an explanation of the already existing support mechanisms. Delegates can use this document to find specific actions recommended by UNHCR for return and reintegration.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees: Progress Report*. Retrieved 18 August 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/562a44639.html>

UNHCR created this report based on the information provided by the governments of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. This report addresses the results of the SSAR during the 2012-2014 period. It provides important statistical information about the programs and initiatives inherent to the Strategy, and delegates can use this information as an example of how these countries work to assist refugees throughout their process from return to reintegration.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2016). *Policy on Cash-Based Interventions* [Website]. Retrieved 17 August 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/581363414>

This Policy is an example of how UNHCR can address and facilitate reintegration in the short-term. This document sets all the policies and principles guiding Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs) as a means to support returnees at the first stage of return heading up to reintegration. It describes the structure, logistics and specific actions to be taken in order to implement and oversight the accurate use of these funds. Delegates can use this document as an example of how UNHCR addresses reintegration and promotes economic sustainability, entrepreneurship and innovation on refugees, IDPs and returnees.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2016). *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries* [Report]. Retrieved 18 August 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/539ab7f79.html>

This Portfolio of Projects includes descriptions, statistics, and in-depth analysis of the projects adopted by the Afghan government to assist return and reintegration of refugees. It explains how the world's largest return process has been performed and can contribute to the debate on new perspectives for enhancing return and reintegration of new scenarios of large-scale migratory outflows. Delegates will find this document useful for understanding the strategies necessary to promote voluntary return.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *Global Appeal 2018-2019* [Report]. Retrieved 9 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/5a0c05027/unhcr-global-appeal-2018-2019-full-report.html>

This is one of the most important documents containing the guidelines of UNHCR's actions for the 2018-2019 period. It contains all the objectives of the agency for this term, including those related to return and reintegration. Delegates can find statistical information and case studies to assist in their further research. In this document delegates can find relevant information about the importance of return and reintegration and how UNHCR is acting to promote this particular durable solution.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, et al. (2007). *Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the I.R. of Pakistan, the Government of the I.R. of Afghanistan, and the UNHCR Governing the Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan*. Retrieved 19 August from: <http://www.unhcr.org/46c98acd2.pdf>

This Agreement is a sample of the tripartite actions and cooperation between UNHCR and both host countries and countries of origin. This document specifies all the actions to be taken in order to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Afghan citizens. Delegates can use this Agreement as an example of how to create or motivate the negotiation between countries affected by large migratory flows and displacement.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Committee. (2008). *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (EC/59/SC/CRP.5)* [Report]. Retrieved 9 July 2018 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/standcom/47b06de42/unhcrs-role-support-return-reintegration-displaced-populations-policy-framework.html>

This report was developed by UNHCR in 2008 and is a fundamental document for understanding how UNHCR addresses its efforts to facilitate return and reintegration. This entire document has valuable information related to the different approaches developed by UNCHR toward return and reintegration. It contains a clear explanation of the principles, practices, and possible activities to be applied throughout a returning and reintegration process.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2016). *In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants: Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/59)*. Retrieved 9 July 2018 from: <http://undocs.org/A/70/59>

In this report, the Secretary-General presents his appeal to Member States to cooperate toward an effective action an international policy heading to assist refugees and potential returnees. This document contains several recommendations for an urgent international response to large refugees and IDPs migratory flows. All these recommendations are based on statistics, in-depth legal analysis, and different case studies. Delegates can use this document as a source for possible solutions to the situation of refugees, IDPs and returnees worldwide.

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