

UNHCR Submission to Irish Aid Review of White Paper on Aid
25 April 2012

1.0 Response

2.1 Introduction:

The High Commissioner for Refugees is mandated by the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. In its efforts to achieve this objective, the Office strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, and to return home voluntarily. By assisting refugees to return to their own country or to settle permanently in another country, UNHCR also seeks lasting solutions to their plight.

UNHCR's Executive Committee and the UN General Assembly have authorized involvement with other groups. These include former refugees who have returned to their homeland; internally displaced people; and people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed.

The Office seeks to reduce situations of forced displacement by encouraging states and other institutions to create conditions which are conducive to the protection of human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In all of its activities, it pays particular attention to the needs of children and seeks to promote the equal rights of women and girls.

UNHCR works in partnership with governments, regional organizations, international and non-governmental organizations. It is committed to the principle of participation, believing that refugees and others who benefit from the organization's activities should be consulted over decisions which affect their lives.

The Office has received the support of the Government of Ireland through a Core Contribution; ad hoc contributions for specific operations; in-kind contributions and the deployment of staff through the Irish Aid standby roster.

2.2 Changing context:

What are the implications of the changes in the global and domestic context for the Government's aid programme in the future and how will these affect current priorities?

For the last 5 years the refugee numbers decreased from 11.4 million at end-2007 to 10.5 million at begin-year 2011 while the number of stateless persons and internally displaced persons of concern to UNHCR increased from 16.7 million to 18.2 million. The nature of persons in need of humanitarian assistance continues to evolve as could be noted in the on-going Libyan crisis. While refugees continue to be of prime concern to UNHCR, the organization is and has adapted to enable it to respond to the needs of stateless persons, internally displaced persons and other groups in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2012-2013, UNHCR foresees to provide protection/assistance to around 11 million refugees and 20 million stateless and internally displaced persons.

Indeed, displacement continues to grow worldwide as new conflicts multiply and old ones fail to be resolved. Some 43.7 million people are now uprooted due to conflict and persecution, the highest number in over 15 years. In 2011 alone, another 750,000 people became refugees in other countries.

In this scenario of drawn-out conflict, durable solutions – a central part of UNHCR's mandate – are becoming more and more difficult to achieve. Seventy percent of the refugees of

concern to UNHCR – more than seven million people – now live in prolonged situations of exile.

This bleak picture shows how important it is to intensify the implementation of the UNHCR Global Plan of Action on protracted refugee situations. However, there is no humanitarian solution for these problems – the solution is often political and it cannot be achieved without committed involvement by key national, regional and global actors.

With old conflicts increasingly intractable, and new ones proliferating, voluntary repatriation figures are at their lowest in 20 years. Fewer than 200,000 refugees chose to return home in 2010, against an annual average of over a million in the last two decades.

Given the limited opportunities for voluntary return, resettlement has become even more vital, as shown by the positive impact of the recent resettlement efforts for the refugees from Bhutan, Iraq and Myanmar.

But resettlement opportunities still fall far short of the needs. The number of places made available annually has remained at about 80,000 for the past three years. Global resettlement needs surpass the annual capacity of receiving states by a ratio of ten to one. In addition, utilizing resettlement as an emergency response has proven challenging, due to rigid quota allocations, lengthy processing times and restrictive profile requirements.

The third durable solution is local integration, a complex and sometimes slow-moving process. UNHCR continues to assist refugees to prepare for local integration in various parts of the world, including West Africa, Tanzania, Eastern Europe, and under the Cities of Solidarity initiative in Latin America. Self-reliance programs are also being supported in a growing number of situations, so that refugees can contribute to the development of their host countries. However, there are many challenges that local integration and self-reliance represent for host states in the Global South in particular. Developing countries accommodate eight of every ten refugees today, making the most fundamental contribution to their protection.

UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons continued to be an important pillar of our operations. In 2010, UNHCR provided protection and assistance to some 14.7 million in 29 countries, in most of which leading one or more of the three clusters under our global responsibility - protection, emergency shelter and camp coordination/camp management. Some 2.9 million internally displaced were able to return to their communities last year, most of them in Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.

Seven years after the introduction of the cluster approach, UNHCR is fully engaged in the current reform efforts led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA. They aim to improve collective results in leadership, coordination, accountability, preparedness and communications. The steps the Office is taking to further strengthen its protection and emergency response capacities are well aligned with this process.

There have been several rounds of intense discussions over the past year regarding the role UNHCR should play in protecting people displaced by natural disasters.

An agreement has not yet been reached on a more predictable engagement in leading the protection cluster at country level in natural disasters, and a case by case basis approach will be maintained, like in the past, as UNHCR cannot refuse to help when requested to do so.

However, effective partnership is the key to success in humanitarian response situations. Based on lessons learned from real-time evaluations, UNHCR launched several initiatives in an effort to make its engagement with partners in refugee emergencies more predictable and

inclusive. The Office set up operational data web portals in all of the major crisis operations, allowing partners to access updated registration information and maps, and to share data on sectorial needs identified and assistance being provided. At the same time, UNHCR initiated a dialogue with several key NGO consortia and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, to identify ways to enhance our joint response and make our partnerships more transparent, strategic and effective. In addition, the Office has been giving its full support to the reform agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which aims at strengthened leadership, improved strategic planning and better accountability to affected communities, governments and donors. Together with WFP, UNICEF and several NGO partners, UNHCR's focus in this process has been to ensure that the system can better enable operational effectiveness and delivery.

2.3 Key Issues:

How should the Government respond to the key issues of hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance & human rights, and gender equality? Are there other issues? Given the limited resources and the need to focus these, which issues should the Government prioritise in its future aid programming?

UNHCR believes that the key issues identified in the white paper coincide with the most important issues to be addressed through the use of ODA. The work of UNHCR is reflected in all these issues: fulfilling its protection mandate by securing rights, promoting equality and respecting diversity; as well as encouraging the development of normative frameworks and protection-sensitive policies at local, national, regional and global levels.

Building on UNHCR's experience with its persons of concern, Irish Aid might wish to consider the following approaches in its areas of focus.

UNHCR's age, gender and diversity approach

Through the systematic application of age, gender and diversity (AGD) considerations in its operations worldwide, UNHCR seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives. This approach has been pursued since 2004 and has been incorporated into country planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In 2011, the AGD approach was bolstered by the issuance of an age, gender and diversity policy, which marked an important step towards bringing about a common understanding within UNHCR and partners of what AGD means in practice. The central operational elements of the AGD approach are i) ensuring the active participation of diverse and representative groups of persons of concern in UNHCR's work, using the participatory assessment (PA) methodology and other tools and ii) to identify, working together with individuals and communities, where targeted actions are necessary to address inequalities and support the empowerment and protection of discriminated groups.

A number of good AGD practices were in evidence in UNHCR operations throughout 2011. In Burundi, participatory assessment results were shared at the beginning of the year with the donor community, partners and governmental counterparts and formed the basis of all planning activities and programme design. Through its role as co-chair, with OHCHR, of a newly-formed Pacific Regional Protection Cluster, which is now an integral part of the Pacific Regional Humanitarian Team, UNHCR in Australia promoted the principles of AGD in relation to disaster and emergency response in the Pacific. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the health insurance scheme (HISE) for refugees was initiated with the Government. The scheme was based on needs expressed during participatory assessments, and more than 200,000 refugees have had access to it. In Namibia, data on populations of concern covers AGD, and assistance is planned and implemented with special attention to groups with specific needs.

Participatory Assessment

The use of the participatory assessment methodology in UNHCR operations has been central to introducing the AGD approach globally. With few exceptions, as of 2011, UNHCR teams were making use of an assessment tool, which structures consultation with and the participation of persons of concern. Where the methodology is not being applied, lack of access to populations of concern, often linked to security concerns, is cited as the main impediment.

While UNHCR and its partners are in many instances still learning how to apply the methodology to maximum effect, over the past few years a number of examples of solid practice in this respect have emerged in the field. In Burundi, for example, assessment results were shared with the donor community, partners and governmental counterparts and formed the basis of all planning activities and design of programs at the beginning of 2011. In Colombia, the findings helped the Ministry for Social Protection to develop national guidelines for the prevention and attention to forced displacement that takes into account the different needs, concerns and risks of men, women, girls, and boys, without distinction as to age, gender or background. In Georgia, participatory assessment conducted with government formed the basis of the extension of the National Action Plan for Internally Displaced Persons.

Sexual and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response

With the release of its updated SGBV Strategy in 2011, UNHCR is deepening its commitment to the fight against SGBV. The updated strategy supports country offices as they develop operation-specific anti-SGBV measures that include prevention and response and promote gender equality. The framework targets action areas that are often overlooked, such as: i) the particular risks affecting three specific population groups—children, persons with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons; (ii) risks related to unsafe environments and survival sex; and (iii) the transformative role of not only survivors, but also men and boys, as agents of change for achieving gender equality and ending violence.

In May 2011, UNHCR began to roll out country-specific SGBV strategies with a workshop to enhance the weight given to anti-SGBV activities in Country Operation Plans and build the capacity of staff and partners to devise comprehensive measures based on the updated strategy.

Capacity building and development of the SGBV e-learning programme were particular priorities. UNHCR managed the Asia component of the project, which trained 40 capacity promoters in Nepal, Afghanistan and Pakistan and another 100 international and national UN, government and partner staff on preventive measures and response mechanisms for SGBV survivors. Through this project, standard operating procedures to deal with SGBV were developed in the three countries, while eight NGOs in Nepal were trained to use the Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS).

All field operations were encouraged to organize innovative activities and special events to raise awareness of SGBV and to devise strategies to combat it. In this regard, UNHCR participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Sexual and Gender-based Violence on the theme, From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World.

UNHCR continues to serve as a member of the UN Action Steering Committee, and coordinates with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the 12 UN agencies to report on Security Council Resolution 1960 on Sexual

Violence in Conflict. In addition, as a participant in the GBV Area of Responsibility under the Global Protection Cluster and the GBVIMS global team, UNHCR contributed to the production of the GBV inter-agency manual and GBVIMS roll-out guidelines

Child protection

The protection of children is a high priority for UNHCR. The launch of a consultative process in 2011 will result in a new global Protection Agenda for Children, to be released in 2012. This will reinforce and streamline protection for children.

The Best Interests Assessment/Determination (BIA/BID) procedure is a key protection tool for children at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children. It provides the necessary safeguards for best-interest decision-making affecting children at risk. Significant efforts have been made to strengthen UNHCR and partner capacity in this area. A training-of-trainers session was organized with participants from 21 operations, resulting in several projects at the country level. UNHCR also published the Field Handbook on the Implementation of UNHCR BID Guidelines, with accompanying material in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, as a joint initiative with the International Rescue Committee. A BID e-learning course currently being developed will be issued in 2012.

Guidance for field offices on how to monitor child-specific GSPs was prepared during the course of the year. This is an important tool for measuring progress, as the 2011 baselines for the child-specific GSP indicators reveal that this is an area which will require continued support over the years.

Partners continued to play an important role in UNHCR's activities related to child protection. Deployments from Save the Children Norway and Sweden, ICMC, the IRC's Surge project and the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils helped 11 operations to address gaps in child protection and implement BID procedures. These deployments also benefitted Tunisia, Ethiopia and Kenya, providing much needed support for UNHCR's child protection capacity in emergency situations.

Family reunification

As forced displacement and flight can often result in family separation and dispersal, UNHCR advocates for a flexible approach to what constitutes the principle of family unity, one that covers relationships beyond parents and children and includes common-law and same-sex partnerships.

When the whereabouts of relatives were unknown, UNHCR worked closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to help restore family links. Besides considering and submitting resettlement cases under the family reunification category, UNHCR also supported family reunification by securing travel documents, entry and/or exit permits, making travel arrangements and providing financial assistance to special protection cases. Close coordination with IOM and NGOs continued to be instrumental in realizing family reunification.

UNHCR also supported family reunification for children when this was considered to be in their best interest. In the context of durable solutions, the best interests process documents family links and tracing undertaken to facilitate reunification.

Gender equality and the protection of women

As part of the commemorations year, UNHCR undertook global consultations with refugee and displaced women and girls. The Regional Dialogues with Women and Girls gathered more than 1,000 participants and showed that refugee and internally displaced women and girls are at risk of SGBV in every aspect of their lives.

The year 2011 marked the 10th anniversary of the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women. An analysis of standards and indicators reports revealed that, while progress has been made, UNHCR operations have yet to meet the commitments fully. UNHCR produced one video report and five short video clips on each of the five commitment themes (SGBV, participation, food distribution, individual registration and documentation, and sanitary materials) to reaffirm their relevance.

UNHCR developed a regional Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) project targeting the Somali refugee populations in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen. The project addresses misconceptions on FGM, documents good practices, involves influential Somali leaders and scholars, and provides livelihood support to those working to end this practice.

As of July 2011 UNHCR is a full member of the UN Adolescent Girls Task Force (AGTF) Joint Statement, which promotes projects to help this target group.

2.4 Ways of Working:

How can the Government further strengthen its ways of working in delivering an effective aid programme, with a view to delivering real results in poverty reduction?

Aid Effectiveness and Accountability

UNHCR is striving to ensure that the aid provided to the persons of concern is more effective and reflects the capacity to deliver better value for the money received by its donors who, despite global financial and economic upheavals, generously increased their support to UNHCR's work during last fifth consecutive years.

UNHCR has undertaken several reform initiatives during the past several years which have helped the Office to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Far from aiming at structural reform as an end in itself, these investments focused on improving our ability to deliver, notably by strengthening protection and emergency response capacity.

During 2011, UNHCR created over 40 new protection positions across the globe in areas such as resettlement, refugee status determination, statelessness and cluster leadership. Protection learning was also strengthened, with a dozen new or updated courses for UNHCR and partner staff created.

Last year also saw the full implementation of UNHCR's global stock management system, a key feature of its enhanced emergency response capacity. The new network of supply hubs has enabled us to make significant savings on airlifts and, together with a 20 per cent increase in stock levels of relief items, now allows us to respond within 72 hours to simultaneous emergencies of up to 600,000 persons.

After the successful reforms of recent years, we are set to continue on this path in the future. Fully conscious of the responsibility which our donors' high level of confidence brings for assuring the quality of its financial and programme management, since late 2011, UNHCR has been taking a number of new measures to reinforce the Office's capacity in this regard, and to enhance our accountability to donors and persons of concern alike. We will continue to improve our organizational response to emergencies, through quicker and more predictable staff deployment mechanisms and faster resource allocation procedures.

Likewise, first steps were taken to reinforce coordination and support capacities to facilitate a more predictable and accountable inter-agency engagement in refugee outflows. A robust investment in UNHCR's information-management capabilities is another key factor in this respect which we began to address in late 2011.

As part of the structural and management reform process, UNHCR out-posted certain services and administrative units to the Budapest Global Service Centre, reducing HQs costs from 14% to approximately 9% of UNHCR's annual budget. The savings generated by this reform process have been maintained over the past five years. Additional post creation, in line with the strategic objectives outlined above, continues to be balanced against the objective of maintaining a lean and efficient HQ structure. In the absence of these reforms, it is estimated that HQs costs would otherwise consume approximately 16-18% of the budget: the positive impact of the out-posting exercise is estimated at roughly \$15 million per year.

Additionally, but less easily quantifiable, is a simplification initiative launched by the High Commissioner in March 2011, aimed at streamlining systems and procedures to improve overall efficiency. These measures include: electronic processing of administrative documents; expedited procedures for requesting Operational Reserve Transfers in Emergencies; expedited procurement procedures; new emergency staffing mechanisms for emergencies; and reduced reporting requirements and simplified planning processes. For example, UNHCR is implementing a Global Fleet Management system to improve the effectiveness of vehicles used in field operations and to save costs. Significant savings are anticipated through the bulk purchasing of vehicles with corresponding discounts, and with the lower maintenance costs of a better-managed fleet.

The establishment of the ICT service centre in Amman Jordan in mid-2011 also effectively moved technical staff closer to the field and improved performance. As a result of the out-posting of IT staff to regional support hubs, the number of staff at HQ reduced by 53% — from 90 to 42 staff members. The new structure is expected to generate approximately \$12-15 million in savings from 2011-2015.

Working with Multilateral organizations

Multilateralism is key to making UNHCR more effective. It is important that the Office forges closer relationships with States, as it helps to ensure that a maximum number are co-owners of UNHCR policies and actively participate in their implementation. It also promotes cooperation between States and an open dialogue on how to better share responsibilities and burdens. UNHCR believes that the relationship with Irish Aid is exemplary.

UNHCR and Irish Aid

UNHCR is very satisfied and grateful for the excellent partnership and ways of working between Irish Aid and UNHCR. UNHCR appreciates the early and flexible funding provided in line with the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and Ireland's continued commitment to UNHCR during difficult economic times. UNHCR also appreciates Irish Aid's support through the existing stand-by agreement which includes both staff deployments and NFI support. Receiving operations have been very impressed with the quality of staff deployed and the quick response with NFIs in emergencies. UNHCR welcomes the upcoming bilateral with Irish Aid in May 2012 and the excellent relationship with the Permanent Representation in Geneva and between Irish Aid, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the UNHCR Office in Ireland.

In addition, UNHCR is fully committed to increase Inter-Agency Engagement for Refugee Emergencies. Indeed, inter-agency partnerships are critical to effective and coordinated delivery of humanitarian interventions and ever more so in the increasingly complex and crowded humanitarian environment in which UNHCR now operates. UNHCR has a responsibility to coordinate and cooperate with all stakeholders when responding to a humanitarian crisis and particularly in refugee emergencies as the agency mandated to lead the response. Following a series of experiences in emergencies in 2010-11, UNHCR is committed to strengthen its efforts i) to reach out to other agencies; and ii) to improve our leadership and coordination skills. Similar reviews and discussions in the context of the

ERC's "Transformative Agenda" have occurred within the IASC, seeking to strengthen coordination among all agencies throughout the humanitarian community.

CERF

Through its offices in the field, UNHCR is further engaging and advocating for funding with the CERF and the various field-based pooled funds. While UNHCR has continued to advocate for its share of the funding (12% in 2011), it has been difficult to ensure that the Humanitarian Country Team consider protection-related projects as lifesaving priorities. Equally, responding to humanitarian needs of refugees as a population group require special attention along international legal frameworks and therefore requires a certain level of expertise in relation to refugee affairs. UNHCR is continuously providing information and advice to the HCT and its sister agencies on the above with the aim to ensure refugee needs are included in future submissions.

Transitional Solutions Initiatives ("TSI")

TSI is aimed to work towards including displacement needs on the development agenda. TSI signifies collaboration between humanitarian and development, and, bilateral and multilateral actors to work with national governments in finding solutions and ensuring sustainability of interventions for displaced persons and local community members. TSI can be applicable both to selected post-conflict situations with major displacement, and protracted refugee/IDP situation.

As of March 2012, UNHCR and UNDP lead this multi-stakeholder initiative in eastern Sudan, Colombia, and Nepal.