

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment of UNHCR

Summary	
Organisation: UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)	Date: February 2011
Description of Organisation	
<p>The basis for the work of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and the Statute of the Office. UNHCR's mandate empowers it to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and other persons of concern while working to find durable solutions to their situation.</p> <p>Supported by the General Assembly and as a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UNHCR also has the responsibility to lead and coordinate international humanitarian efforts to protect and assist conflict related Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). 6,000 regular UNHCR staff, along with hundreds of implementing partners, currently deal with 36.4 million uprooted people in 126 countries¹.</p> <p>The Agency is governed by the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The UNHCR Executive Committee, composed of 78 member states, approves the agency's biennial programmes and the corresponding budget. These are presented by UNHCR's High Commissioner António Guterres (former PM of Portugal), who is appointed by the UN General Assembly.</p> <p>UNHCR expenditure in 2008 was \$1.6 billion and \$1.75 billion in 2009. To capture a more accurate picture of humanitarian need, UNHCR introduced global needs assessments in 2009 as a basis for budgeting and planning (rather than planning according to likely income) and arrived at a \$3 billion budget for its 2010 operations.</p>	

Contribution to UK Development Objectives	Score (1-4)
<p>1a. Critical role in meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + There is widespread evidence that UNHCR fulfils a critical/pivotal role in the international humanitarian architecture; particularly in conflict situations. + UNHCR is uniquely mandated and has expertise in providing protection and assistance to displaced persons. + UNHCR also plays an important role with governments to bring countries' policies, practices and laws on displacement into compliance with international standards. – Despite the fact that UNHCR is a cluster lead, they sometimes fail to provide adequate international leadership. = UNHCR has a critical role within the humanitarian system and in bringing governments into line with international standards. However, it could provide more consistent leadership on cluster responsibilities and inter-cluster 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>

<p>coordination.</p>	
<p>1b. Critical role in meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR's role and operations are important for UK development and humanitarian objectives. + Their unique mandate and comparative advantage will continue to make them critical to delivering DFID humanitarian objectives and UKBA domestic refugee objectives. – Inconsistent leadership on coordination and clusters = UNHCR has a good fit with UK aid objectives and wider HMG priorities, however it sometimes fails to fulfil its cluster responsibilities. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>2. Attention to Cross-cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Staff are well equipped to work in conflict/fragile contexts, and working in such environments is mainstreamed throughout UNHCR's guidance and policies. + Monitoring reports are frequently published, actively used, and inform policy and programming. = UNHCR works very well in fragile contexts with experienced staff, comprehensive guidelines and frequent monitoring reports. <p>2b. Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + There is clear evidence of UNHCR's policies, structures and incentives to promote gender equality, with gender being mainstreamed at country-level. + An external evaluation of UNHCR's Age Gender Diversity Mainstreaming approach highlights positive impact on gender policy, programming, and outcomes. – UNHCR's new Results Based Management <i>Focus</i> system currently lacks disaggregated sex and age data. = UNHCR's policy, structures and incentives all promote gender equality but their new Results Based Management system does not incorporate disaggregated sex and age data. <p>2c. Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR is experienced in environmental management and it is a policy priority in all operations and phases of the agency's work. + UNHCR's Environmental Guidelines are wide ranging and of a high standard. + Environmental protection is included in UNHCR's budgeting and planning and is a cross-cutting issue in UNHCR's Results Framework and GSPs. – UNHCR could still do more to fully implement their guidelines and policies. = UNHCR are strong in this area with comprehensive 	<p style="text-align: center;">Strong (4)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory (3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory (3)</p>

<p>guidelines and the inclusion of environmental protection in their budgeting and planning, but they could still do more to further imbed and develop their approach.</p>	
<p>3. Focus on Poor Countries¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR is active in all countries identified as having the greatest humanitarian need + UNHCR also works with refugees in countries which are wealthier = UNHCR mainly works in those countries with the greatest humanitarian need, but its mandate means it also has a presence in other countries. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>4. Contribution to Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR is able to demonstrate a significant contribution to humanitarian results and that it delivers against most of its objectives. + The agency is making good progress on enhancing its capability by introducing new comprehensive results based management (RBM) systems and tools, including a Global Management Accountability Framework. + Their prioritised budgeting and planning ensures challenging objectives and ambitious targets for improvements in delivery at country-level are maintained. + Results are being delivered at country-level in part due to sweeping structural and management reforms. – The reforms still have some teething problems and UNHCR needs to continue to refine its systems. = UNHCR is delivering well against their objectives, both at the strategic and country level. A wide-range of reforms has supported this consistent delivery. 	<p>Strong (4)</p>
<p>Organisational Strengths</p>	<p>Score (1-4)</p>
<p>5. Strategic & Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR has a clear mandate with clear line of sight to strategy and implementation plans and an effective governing body and effective leadership which uses results and evaluation evidence to drive improvements. + The agency is also undergoing positive reforms in the area of transparent, merit-based recruitment. + It has implemented in 2010 a comprehensive results framework. + It has an effective evaluation function which is implementing processes to ensure evaluations are acted on. – Some staff dissatisfaction about the way postings and promotions are awarded. = UNHCR has a clear mandate with an effective governing 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>

¹ Humanitarian agencies have been assessed according to their focus on countries with the greatest humanitarian need

<p>body and leadership. There is some staff dissatisfaction with postings and promotion, but UNHCR are instituting reforms in this area.</p>	
<p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR sets operational budgets and plans, follows criteria for allocating funding, and regularly publishes budgets and expenditure. + The agency is strong on financial accountability with a range of internal and external oversight processes. + Financial systems allow flexibility to meet priority needs within pre-agreed operational budgets. – Lack of detailed information on UNHCR’s criteria for allocation of core funding across their 4 budget pillars (population groups). – UNHCR field offices could more comprehensively manage costs, maximise resources, and curtail programmes where necessary. = UNHCR has strong financial accountability processes and sets operational budgets and plans. There is a lack of detailed information on how funds are allocated across their 4 budget pillars, and some field offices could do more to control costs or maximise resources. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR challenges and supports partners to think about value for money (VFM) + They have a good range of systems and processes that require senior management to take account of return and cost effectiveness, which are continually developed. + Procurement is driven by VFM and spend is tracked, analysed and reported. + UNHCR has achieved substantial reductions in overall administrative costs. – Some country offices are not yet thinking about VfM or cost control seriously. = UNHCR has a good range of systems and processes to ensure VfM is considered by the organisation and that senior management consider cost effectiveness, however this does not always translate to <u>all</u> country office behaviour. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNHCR works effectively with a wide range of partners including UN agencies, NGOs and national/regional structures. + UNHCR is effective at incorporating beneficiary voice in its policies and programmes. – UNHCR needs to further strengthen its system-wide responsibilities: cluster leadership; support to the HC system; common needs assessment; and effective 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

<p>financial partnership arrangements with implementing partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UNHCR needs to further enhance its ability to adjust its programmes to reflect priorities agreed by the cluster. = UNHCR works well with its established partners, but has not yet fully embraced and adapted to its system-wide responsibilities. 	
<p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Member States are well represented and are able to influence decision making through the governing board. + Stakeholders have effective mechanisms to complain about the UNHCR's policies and programmes. + UNHCR is applying for HAP accreditation and has effective tools to ensure beneficiary participation in their project cycle. – UNHCR has a 'financial disclosure and declaration of interest form' as opposed to a formal disclosure policy. – UNHCR does not systematically publish project documentation (evaluations, annual reviews, project completion reports, economic, social and environmental impact assessments). = Member states are well represented in UNHCR's structures and beneficiary voice is also incorporated into its projects. However, it does not systematically publish all project documentation nor have a formal disclosure policy. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>Likelihood of Positive Change</p>	<p>Score (1-4)</p>
<p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Senior management are likely to continue to strive for continued improvement. + UNHCR has made substantial progress in many areas, particularly internal reform. – UNHCR are being pulled in two directions by donors – some who believe it should take a more active role in UN coordination mechanisms and some who push UNHCR to prioritise its mandate for refugees. This may hamper their ability to reform. = UNHCR is a self-improving agency and it is likely that they will continue to be so. However, they are facing difficulties with embedding results based management throughout the organisation, and are being pushed to further strengthen their system-wide responsibilities. 	<p>Likely (3)</p>

ⁱ UNHCR Global Report 2009