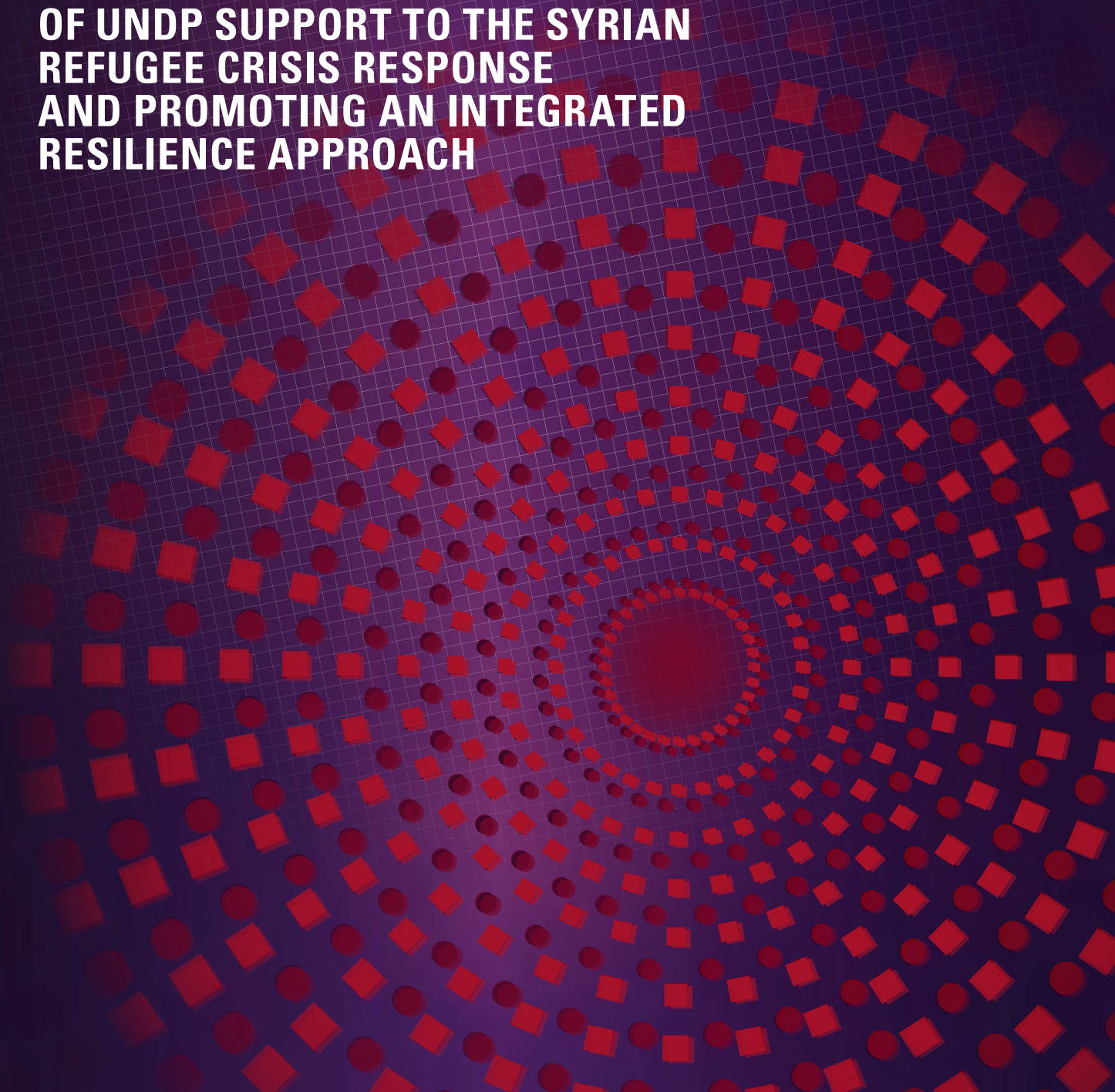




SUMMARY:

# EVALUATION

**OF UNDP SUPPORT TO THE SYRIAN  
REFUGEE CRISIS RESPONSE  
AND PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED  
RESILIENCE APPROACH**





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Full Report can be accessed at:

<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/refugee.shtml>

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# FOREWORD



Refugee crises globally are not only increasing in scale but are also protracted and have significant development consequences. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), currently more than 79.5 million people are displaced worldwide—the highest number on record.



As the Syrian crisis has entered its tenth year, this assessment of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach is especially timely. The evaluation covers the Syrian refugee crisis-response programmes in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt for the period 2015-2019. The evaluation assessed the coordination structure of the Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP) and key streams of the UNDP country-level response.

The protracted nature of the crisis warranted a response that is distinct from the response during the initial stages of the crisis, one that would bridge the humanitarian and development programming divide. There is a renewed emphasis at the global and country levels on putting into practice intergovernmental agreements adopted in recent years to promote resilience and strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. The importance of resilience-based approaches through institutional strengthening and sustainable solutions cannot be overemphasized.

UNDP supported national and local governments in refugee host countries to address the development impacts of the crisis. UNDP helped bring a development approach to humanitarian refugee response, thus contributing to consolidation of the humanitarian-development nexus. The UNDP contribution has been important in transforming the international discourse on protracted refugee crises by adding a development and resilience approach.

The 3RP, which UNDP coordinated jointly with UNHCR, provided a framework for the activities of United Nations and other agencies at the regional and country levels, to address humanitarian and development issues simultaneously, using a resilience approach. The 3RP was successful in bringing to the Syrian refugee response a combined framework that provided humanitarian support and a resilience-based development approach to strengthening institutions, communities and households. Uniting these two support frames has contributed to strengthening municipal capacities and provides a replicable model for future refugee crises.

Notwithstanding such successes, further efforts are needed to bridge the refugee and host community programming silos. While national resilience plans are an important step forward, more practical programme models are needed to demonstrate the nexus approach. Building on its substantive engagement in the 3RP, UNDP is well positioned to provide thought leadership in promoting practical approaches to the humanitarian-development peace nexus at the country level. There is scope for UNDP to play a catalytic role in enabling private sector-based solutions to promote the resilience of both host communities and refugees.

I hope this evaluation will serve to inform both future UNDP corporate refugee and displacement programme strategies and debates on the humanitarian-development nexus.



**Oscar A. Garcia**  
**Director**  
**Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP**

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## BACKGROUND

Refugee crises globally are not only increasing in scale but are protracted and have significant development consequences. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently more than 79.5 million people displaced worldwide— the highest number on record since such statistics have been collected. As a result of the Syrian conflict, there are 5.6 million refugees in the region, severely impacting neighboring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and to a lesser extent Iraq, Egypt and some European Union countries.

UNDP supports a total of about 40 countries that host refugees and/or are countries of origin through direct engagement to address the development consequences of displacement and durable solutions for the refugees. UNDP interventions range from supporting early recovery coordination to comprehensive, resilience-based responses for host communities and refugees.

For the Syrian refugee crisis response, UNDP supported national and local governments in host countries to address the development impacts of the crisis. Together with UNHCR, the UNDP coordinated the Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP) which provided a framework for the activities of United Nations and other agencies at the regional and country levels, to address humanitarian and development issues simultaneously, using a resilience

approach. The 3RP is considered a paradigm shift from predominantly humanitarian response plans.

The UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 explicitly recognized displacement as an emerging issue for which specific signature solutions could be developed in partnership with relevant agencies. The previous Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 did not explicitly prioritize support to refugee response although broadly considered it as part of conflict-related displacement and response. Globally from 2011 to 2016, UNDP had 125 projects in 39 countries pertaining to refugee-related displacement worth US\$1.3 billion. Expenditure for the Syrian refugee crisis response for 2014-2018 was \$317 million, with Lebanon having significantly higher expenditures compared to other host countries, including Turkey which hosts the highest number of refugees.

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP carried out an evaluation of UNDP Support to the Syrian Refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach. The evaluation will contribute to the consolidation of the Syrian refugee crisis response as well as the development of corporate programming and strategy for refugee response. The evaluation will strengthen the accountability of UNDP to global, regional and national programme partners and the Executive Board.



**EXPENDITURE** for the Syrian refugee crisis response for **2014-2018** was **\$317 MILLION**



**LEBANON** had significantly higher expenditures compared to other host countries

**TURKEY** hosts the highest number of refugees

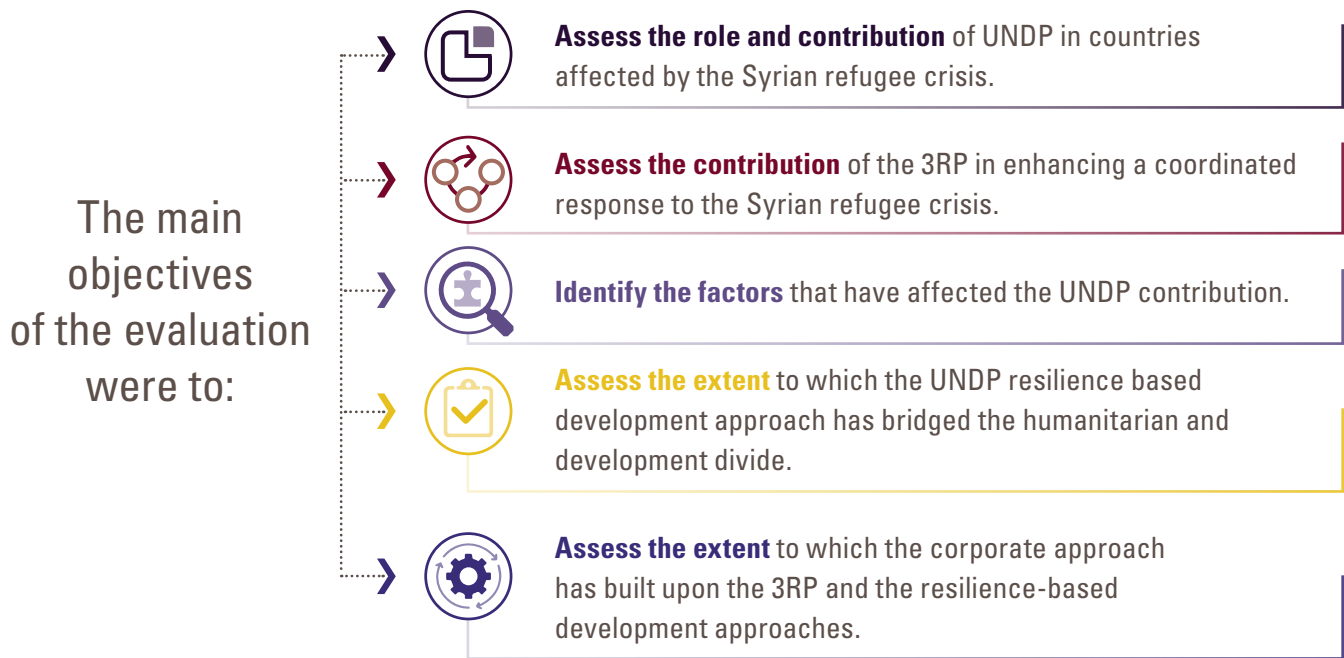
# WHAT WE EVALUATED

The evaluation assessed the contribution of UNDP to the Syrian refugee crisis response, the 3RP, at the national and regional levels.<sup>1</sup> While the primary focus of the evaluation was the Syrian refugee crisis response, for a broader understanding of UNDP support to refugee response, the evaluation also assessed the UNDP positioning and approaches in its response to other refugee crises. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the humanitarian-development nexus and resilience-based development approaches have underpinned the Syrian refugee crisis response framework as well as other UNDP refugee responses and corporate frameworks.

To have a broader understanding of the UNDP refugee response approach, the evaluation also considered the UNDP approach in other refugee crises to provide a broader understanding of the UNDP

refugee crisis response: Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (2017-2019), the Lake Chad Basin (2016-2019) and Venezuelan refugees (2017-2019).

The evaluation covered Syrian refugee crisis response programmes in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt for the period 2015-2019, assessing the 3RP coordination structure and key streams of the UNDP country-level response (i.e., livelihoods and employment opportunities, service delivery, energy, social cohesion at the country level, strengthening national capacities). The evaluation also covered UNDP regional and national contributions to the 3RP in terms of leadership, coordination, partnerships, funding and advocacy, building on four Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) conducted by the IEO in 2019 in Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria.



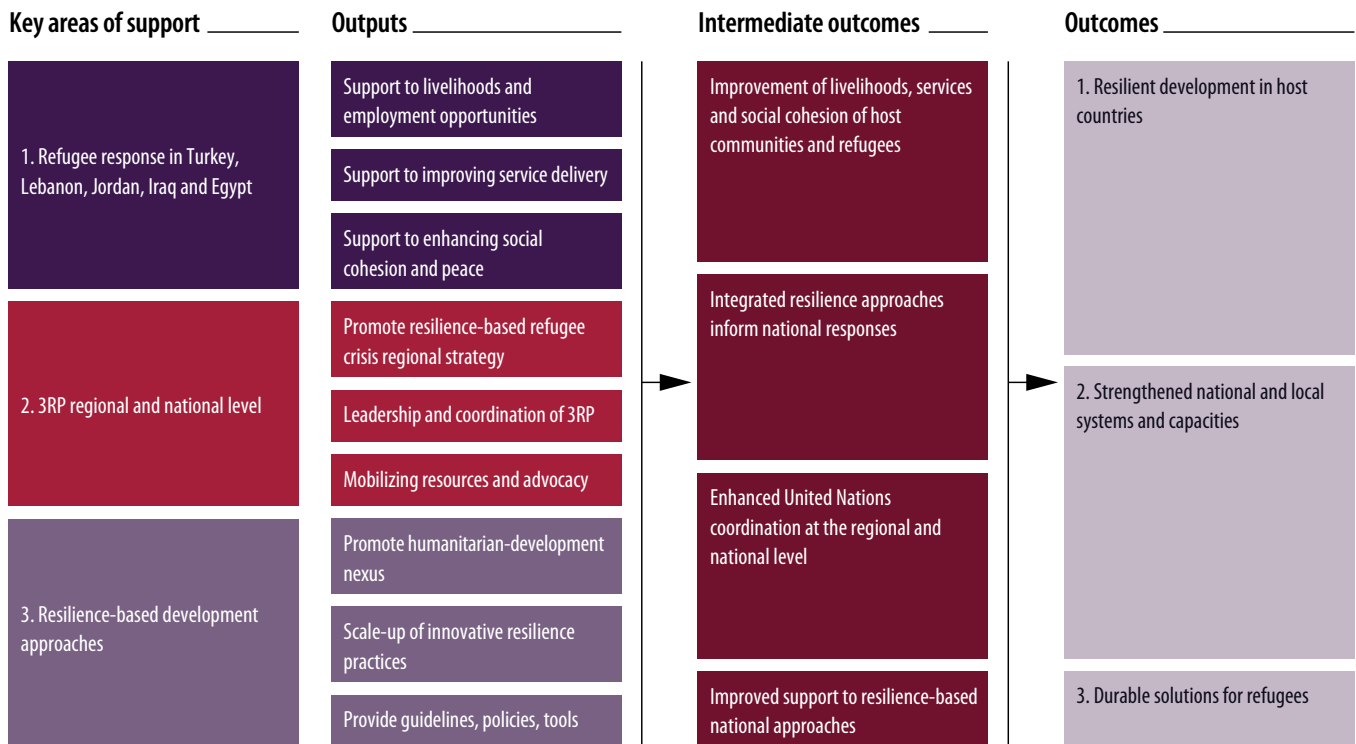
<sup>1</sup> Although initially envisaged, this evaluation could not be carried out jointly with UNHCR because of differing evaluation schedules. UNHCR completed its evaluation in 2018.

# METHODS USED

The evaluation developed a theory of change for determining the UNDP contribution to countries affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, providing a framework for assessing contributions to three key outcomes for refugee response and resilience support: resilient development in host countries; strengthened national and local systems and capacities; and durable solutions for refugees.

The theory of change distinguishes between immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes, recognizing that some of the components are iterative. UNDP initiatives result in intermediate outcomes, which comprise initiatives to strengthen humanitarian and development linkages and resilient national development policies, processes and programmes for the social and economic development of refugees and host communities. The line of accountability of UNDP programmes was considered to be at the intermediate outcome level.

## A THEORY OF CHANGE FOR ASSESSING UNDP CONTRIBUTIONS

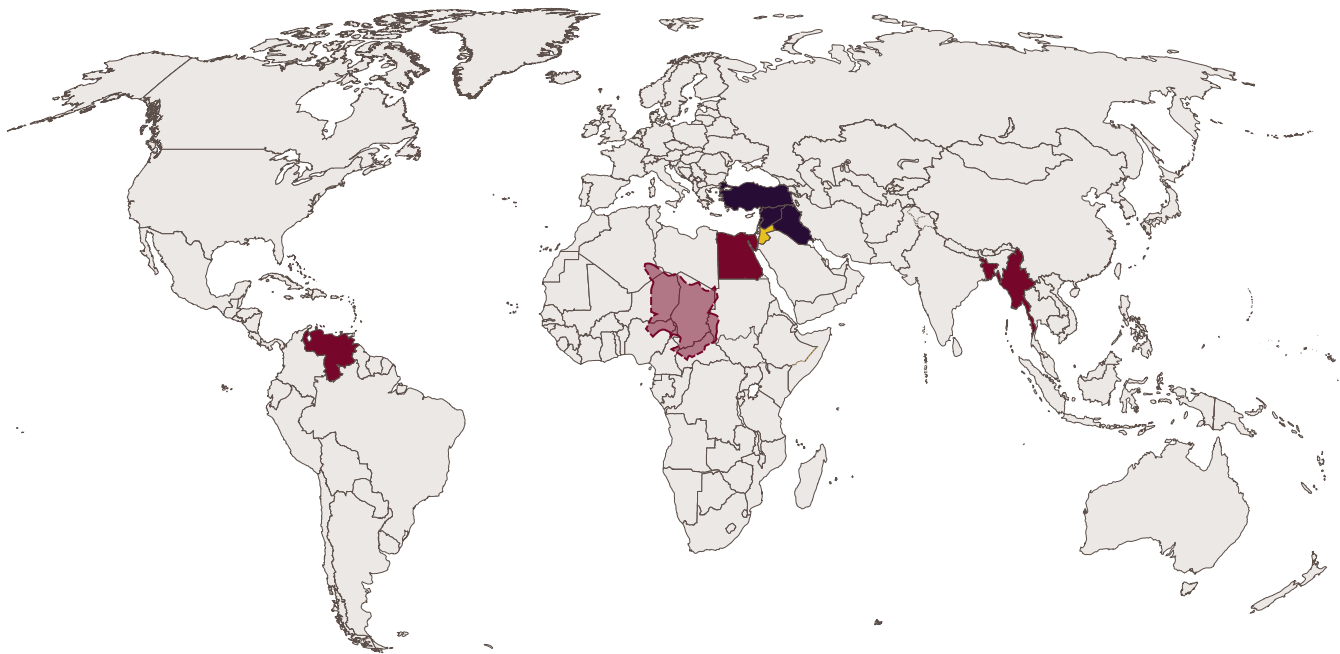


Source: Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP



# Data collection methods and sources

Mixed methods for data collection, both qualitative and quantitative, were used to gather evidence. The data collected from multiple sources were triangulated before applying the analysis tools. The evaluation used a rating scale for analysis to determine the strength of the evidence collected, weighted scoring, quantification of the meta-analysis of evaluations and a rubric for determining the resilience approach.



## COUNTRY STUDIES

4

**BUILT ON INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS (ICPES) CARRIED OUT BY THE IEO**

- Turkey
- Lebanon
- Iraq
- Syria

1

**CASE STUDY OF JORDAN**

34

**META-ANALYSIS OF EVALUATIONS**



**INTERVIEWS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND BENEFICIARIES INCLUDING COMMUNITY VISITS**



**DOCUMENT REVIEW**

- UNDP policy and programme documents
- Decentralized evaluations
- Credible external reviews; reports on UNDP performance
- Strategies, studies and documents on refugee response and the humanitarian-development nexus from national



**DATA ANALYSIS INSTRUMENTS**

- Meta-analysis
- Weighted Scoring
- Rubric for determining the resilience approach

4

**DESK STUDIES OF THE REFUGEE CRISES**

- Egypt (Syrian refugees)
- Lake Chad Basin (Niger, Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon)
- Myanmar and Bangladesh (Rohingya)
- Venezuela (Peru and Ecuador)

# WHAT WE FOUND

## National policy support and institutional capacity development

1. UNDP is yet to build on its comparative strengths and organizational expertise for policy engagement, and expand its long-standing work at the municipal level to provide bottom-up solutions.

## The UNDP role and contribution to 3RP

2. The 3RP was successful in bringing together two interrelated dimensions of the Syrian refugee crisis response: humanitarian support and a resilience-based development approach to strengthening institutions, communities and households.
  3. Joint UNDP and UNHCR support to 3RP resulted in significant resource mobilization and strengthened inter-agency coordination.
4. The 3RP had limited effectiveness in bringing the resilience dimension to humanitarian response.
  5. Constraints limited the extent to which 3RP could enable development solutions to improve the condition of the refugees.
  6. The UNDP “resilience lens” was not sufficient in enabling regional coherence or in integrating resilience in the 3RP.
  7. Working together the UNDP and UNHCR have significantly contributed to the Syrian refugee crisis response. This partnership has immense potential to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

## Employment generation and livelihoods

8. UNDP support to employment and livelihoods for Syrian refugees and host communities contributed to temporary employment and enabled medium-term community-level income-generation processes. The institutionalization of such initiatives is inadequate for promoting sustainable solutions.
  9. UNDP programme support contributed to the development of inclusive and sustainable value chain models. Micro examples of success need to be scaled up to address the employment challenges of host communities and Syrian refugees.

**10.** In Turkey, UNDP enhanced productivity and competitiveness in strategic sectors through a mix of national policy support and establishment of model industrial modernization centres. These efforts helped generate employment at scale for host country nationals and refugees.

### **Strengthening services and local development**

**11.** UNDP support at the local level, particularly infrastructure development and service delivery for municipalities, has been critical for both host communities and the Syrian population.

**12.** Through solid waste management, UNDP demonstrated that a development approach to strengthening services has potential for positive long-term outcomes.

**13.** Support to the Palestinian gatherings in Lebanon demonstrates the inclusive programme support of UNDP and its ability to engage in sensitive areas.

### **Private sector development**

**14.** UNDP programmes did not reflect the urgent need to address institutional bottlenecks for private sector development and engagement.

### **Gender-inclusive refugee response**

**15.** Opportunities for gender-informed programme design and implementation remain underutilized.

### **Global, regional and country-level positioning**

**16.** UNDP has not asserted its comparative advantage in furthering the centrality of development in protracted crises at the global and country levels.

**17.** Building on its mandate and experience, UNDP formulated the resilience approach as its offer for anchoring development support during humanitarian response.

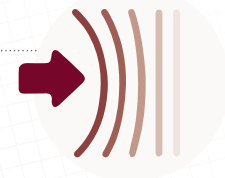
# SNAPSHOT

## of OUR CONCLUSIONS



### 1 UNDP has a niche in the **GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS**

policy space but has not asserted this role at global and country levels.



### 2

UNDP was successful in bringing a **RESILIENCE APPROACH** to the Syrian crisis response discourse.

### 3

The **UNDP/UNHCR PARTNERSHIP** brought a resilience perspective to the crisis response.



### 4

UNDP **EMPLOYMENT MODELS** were successful with a longer time frame and interventions anchored in its development support.



### 5

The development approach to strengthening services in refugee contexts helped **BUILD MUNICIPAL CAPACITIES.**



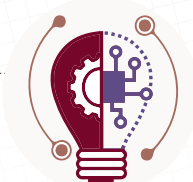
### 6

**COMPARTMENTALIZATION** of humanitarian and resilience support undermined the overall crisis response.



### 7

The low scale and slow pace of UNDP **PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT** impacted efforts towards more sustainable solutions.



### 8

UNDP efforts for **GENDER EQUALITY** did not address gaps in policies and programmes to benefit host communities and refugees.





## Conclusion 1.

**The UNDP contribution to global debates and formulation of intergovernmental agreements to further the humanitarian development nexus in refugee response has been significant. UNDP is well regarded for its multi-stakeholder engagement in a range of development and crisis areas. UNDP has a niche in the global humanitarian-development nexus policy space. UNDP has yet to assert its role in accelerating the humanitarian-development nexus at the global and country levels.**

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international community has continued its efforts to advance the humanitarian-development nexus through global summits and intergovernmental agreements. The global consensus expressed in the endorsement of the Commitment to Action and the new way of working at the World Humanitarian Summit, followed by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, are significant steps in giving renewed thrust to bridging the humanitarian development divide. The global engagement and contribution of UNDP in the intergovernmental events and discussions have been important in reinforcing the importance of development linkages in humanitarian response.

The UNDP collaboration with the humanitarian agencies enabled efforts to reinforce the importance of development linkages in refugee response and enabling durable solutions. Through its resilience approach, UNDP continued to advocate for concerted global action to advance the humanitarian-development nexus in refugee response.

A lack of an explicit commitment to address the development dimensions of displacement as a corporate priority is undermining UNDP positioning. Prioritization of engagement to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in conflict-related refugee crises—particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States region in the context of multiple crises—is not commensurate with the challenges in these regions. Although not exclusively focused on refugee and displacement issues, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (2013) and the more recent Regional Stabilization Strategy of the Lake Chad Basin Commission are important initiatives. Such initiatives have yet to develop wider partnerships and funding mechanisms to address significant challenges of complex and multiple crises. In the Arab States region, UNDP has yet to outline its plan for engaging in refugee-related and other displacements and to harmonize its programmes in Africa and the Arab States region for more strategic engagement.

There is a lack of practical models to address the complexity of the protracted crisis-response contexts in which Governments and international actors intend to implement the humanitarian development nexus, the triple nexus or the new way of working. With the urgency and intensity of growing refugee and other displacement crises, UNDP at the corporate level did not rise to expectations to provide thought leadership in spearheading the United Nations nexus agenda.

The UNDP refugee response has evolved in the past decade with programmes at different levels in over 40 countries. Building on its long development presence, UNDP strategically consolidated its refugee programming and contributions at the country level in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. Because UNDP works with national as well as subnational government actors, its programmes have the potential to inform policy and planning in the areas of employment and social services.



## **Conclusion 2.**

**UNDP was successful in bringing a resilience approach to the Syrian crisis-response discourse, which is a significant contribution by itself, notwithstanding the implementation challenges.**

Its long programme presence in the areas that received Syrian refugees enabled UNDP to respond to the crisis and facilitate response by other United Nations agencies. UNDP was better prepared than several other agencies in analysing and responding to local challenges, contributing to strengthening institutional processes and public service delivery. While there were missed opportunities, efforts to address service delivery challenges contributed to reducing the pressure of a large refugee presence on local systems.

At the country level, UNDP brought a resilience approach to the centre of the Syrian refugee crisis response. Further concerted efforts were lacking to integrate resilience-based approaches in protracted humanitarian response. The lack of shared understanding among United Nations agencies on linking humanitarian and development initiatives led to lost opportunity in improving the conditions for both refugees and host communities.

Humanitarian assistance continues to focus predominantly on refugee populations while resilience activities entail support to host communities and refugees. The lack of more holistic models that would generate employment of scale and enable service delivery solutions by addressing institutional bottlenecks continues to be an issue.

An extended humanitarian phase in a protracted crisis, when the response that is needed is medium to long-term development support, has negative implications for both the host communities and refugees. The high per capita financial response to the Syrian refugee crisis response predominantly achieved humanitarian aims and addressed immediate development concerns. The 3RP could not keep pace with mounting development needs that also underpin the Syrian refugee response. A skewed funding architecture predisposed towards humanitarian support undermined more sustainable development solutions that would benefit host communities and refugees. While UNDP has been consistent in its support to host communities, without an overall framework for addressing the interlinking dimensions of refugee and host community development challenges, the scope of programme outcomes reduced.



### **Conclusion 3.**

**The partnership between UNDP and UNHCR has been significant in bringing a resilience perspective to the Syrian refugee crisis response. UNDP jointly with UNHCR played a key role in the coordination of 3RP, a formidable task given the large scale of response.**

The UNDP-UNHCR partnership contributed to effective coordination of the Syrian refugee crisis response in the host countries and enabled resource mobilization. The commitment by the senior management of UNHCR and UNDP to strengthen programme collaborations has been important in maintaining the momentum to bridge the humanitarian-development divide. The extent to which such collaborations are taken forward in other crises varied, with promising collaborations in the Lake Chad Basin. While there are ongoing efforts to strengthen the partnership between the two agencies at the corporate level, these have yet to be institutionalized for engagement to further the humanitarian-development nexus.

The partnership has yet to consolidate programmes based on the comparative advantage of the two agencies for enhanced development and humanitarian outcomes. The Syria partnership shows that lack of common outcomes and multi-year programme frameworks reduced the contribution of the 3RP. An issue that can blur the mandates and increase humanitarian programme windows is the interest of humanitarian agencies to venture into the development space instead of collaborating with agencies with a development mandate. Although a sensitive issue, reducing the humanitarian programme window has the potential to accelerate development processes and improved

outcomes and improved outcomes for host communities and refugees. While the humanitarian-development nexus is seen as a way forward, agencies have yet to deliberate on this for meaningful solutions.



#### **Conclusion 4.**

**UNDP was successful in providing employment models when there was a longer programme time frame and interventions were anchored in its development support.**

The UNDP Syrian crisis response was aligned with the priorities identified by the host countries. It aimed to address income-generation and service delivery challenges of both the Syrian population and the host communities. The support for competitiveness in Turkey and agri-value chain support in Lebanon and Turkey addressed institutional bottlenecks for refugee and host community employment. Notwithstanding such important successes, UNDP livelihood interventions tend to be scattered, small-scale and uncoordinated, which reduced the contribution to sustainable employment

Balancing short-term interventions with long-term livelihood and employment support is critical for income generation for the Syrian population. UNDP programmes are evolving to achieve this balance. Livelihood support focused more on issues

such as vocational training, with mixed outcomes in terms of sustainability and scale. 3RP interventions remain individually small-scale and fragmented, with a focus on short-term income generation. The 2016 London Conference pledged the creation of 1.1 million jobs by 2018, mostly in Lebanon and Turkey, which host a substantial proportion of the refugee population. While there are commitments to open their labour markets and improve the domestic regulatory environment, this has yet to manifest. The international support to employment creation programmes and access to external markets notwithstanding, there remain significant gaps in durable solutions in employment and livelihoods.

The enabling environment for Syrian labour integration has not been favourable, especially when coupled with the economic downturn in host countries which added to existing employment challenges with further limitations for labour-market absorption. The number of work permits provided by the host countries continues to be low although there are ongoing efforts to accelerate it. The varying levels of economic recession require more concerted strategies to create more employment opportunities for refugee and host populations. Barring examples such as the support to improve competitiveness, UNDP engagement has been limited in responding to some of these challenges.





### Conclusion 5.

**The development approach to strengthening services in refugee contexts contributed to strengthening municipal capacities and providing replicable models.**

As a key actor in strengthening local services in the areas where refugees are concentrated, UNDP support to municipal services is well conceptualized, contributing to stronger municipal capacities in solid waste management and social services. However, the scale of the deterioration of solid waste management services is not matched by the scope of effort at the policy and institutional levels. In Jordan and Lebanon, efforts are still aimed at coping with the situation rather than enabling transformative solutions in improving services. Another area where UNDP has the potential to engage and there are ongoing efforts is in the renewable energy sector. There is considerable scope for demonstrating renewable energy models, informing policies for systemic changes and sustaining the interest of the private sector.

UNDP has invested in municipal development needs and conflict analysis and other assessments, which are highly relevant for strengthening local planning and financing. Strengthening and institutionalizing municipal-level development needs assessments and linking them to SDG data collection has the potential to inform

refugee and host community development responses. Efforts are slowly evolving in making linkages between refugee response and SDG planning, an area where joint United Nations efforts will be important.



### Conclusion 6.

**The 3RP approach is relevant with a much needed emphasis to bring a resilience dimension to humanitarian response. The compartmentalization of the humanitarian and resilience support has significantly undermined the contribution of the overall Syrian refugee crisis response.**

While there is a realization among the 3RP agencies that addressing the development challenges of host communities is essential for an effective refugee response, such a realization did not result in pursuing a coordinated resilience approach. The continued humanitarian mode of response was not appropriate in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey when more advanced development solutions are needed. The United Nations system had limitations in enabling a long-term approach to the protracted crisis, and in addressing underlying development constraints in host countries which are critical for a comprehensive and conflict-sensitive refugee response. The argument that middle-income host countries will fund their development activities

does not hold in the context of an enormous refugee influx which must be included in development efforts.

The narrative of a resilience approach underpinning national 3RP responses is evolving. While UNDP prioritized engagement in coordination, it has yet to position itself with a strong value proposition to promote medium- to long-term resilience approaches. The 3RP at the country level continues to operate in a mode that is most suitable during immediate crisis response, undermining a holistic approach to sustainably address the development consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis response. A related issue that needs wider discussion among humanitarian agencies is the longer humanitarian programme windows that are now sidling into development programme windows with implications for resilience and durable solutions for refugees and host communities alike.

The 3RP did not address the issue of safe return, an important but at the same time politically sensitive and contentious issue. The Brussels conferences on support to Syrian crisis response have been consistent in emphasizing that there will not be any support for a safe return unless outstanding political issues in Syria are resolved. In all host countries, there was tension between the refugees and host communities accompanied by intermittent political posturings.

There were minimal advocacy efforts by the 3RP in bringing into the Brussels deliberations the issues of a safe and voluntary return. As the global experiences of refugee crises have shown, the longer the delay in addressing the issue of safe return, the lesser the possibility of returning to the home country.



### **Conclusion 7.**

**With exceptions across the 3RP countries, private sector engagement received limited attention and is a critical gap in host community and refugee support. The low scale and slow pace of UNDP private sector engagement impacted efforts towards more sustainable solutions.**

Private sector development and engagement that are well adapted to address resilience and humanitarian challenges, create employment of scale and catalyse municipal development are critical to crisis response. While there are examples of private sector partnerships across UNDP programmes, a more structured approach to private sector development is in the early stages and has yet to be strategically pursued. This impacted the scope of UNDP responses and the nature of outcomes for the host communities and refugees. As the UNDP support for improving competitiveness in Turkey shows, the private sector can

play an important role in creating jobs of scale. Such examples have yet to be scaled up by UNDP.

The UNDP comparative advantage in policy development and programme implementation provides it avenues to play an interface role for the private sector with government. While UNDP corporately has shown a commitment to private sector development, it is not addressed in refugee and host community programming even in the Syrian refugee crisis response which is predominantly in middle-income countries, reducing the UNDP contribution. The host countries present varied policy and development contexts which necessitate innovative private sector finance tools. UNDP lacked country-level strategies for sector-specific engagement to derisk the policy space. The scale of UNDP private sector engagement continues to be low when compared to the possibilities the country contexts present.



### **Conclusion 8.**

**The UNDP contribution to furthering gender equality and women’s empowerment in refugee response reflects the lack of priority to this area. Specific measures to address institutional gaps and other capacity challenges in gender-inclusive**

**policies and programmes that would benefit both host communities and refugees were not prioritized.**

UNDP paid attention to including women as recipients of its support across interventions, at times exceeding the expectations set out in the results frameworks. However, efforts to systematically address constraints in enabling gender-inclusive policy frameworks and resource investments for mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment are lacking. Limitations were especially apparent in contexts where there were enormous gender-related challenges that needed comprehensive solutions for achieving peacebuilding and development outcomes.

UNDP has yet to clarify its role and contribution to gender-inclusive programming and practice in crisis contexts and how this will be pursued. There is considerable scope for strengthening strategic partnerships in advocacy efforts and addressing institutional constraints. While there are joint projects, partnerships between UNDP and UN-Women lack a strategic work programme that identifies their respective roles and division of labour to enhance the overall contribution to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

# WAY

## Recommendation

1

**Addressing the humanitarian development-peace nexus in crisis contexts, including refugee contexts, is critical to achieving the SDGs. UNDP should now invest resources to provide thought leadership in promoting practical humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches at the country level.**

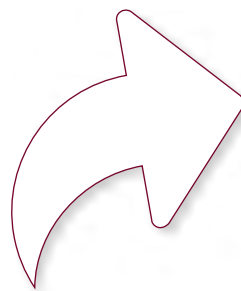
UNDP should outline its corporate strategy for engagement in protracted crises that affect refugees, and the areas and approaches it will prioritize. UNDP should clarify the concepts it offers, invest resources in their operationalization and take specific measures to promote them for wider use. Steps should be taken to ensure that the UNDP resilience offering promotes linkages with humanitarian response rather than as a parallel activity. Measures also should be taken to strengthen regional strategies to comprehensively address protracted refugee crises and their interface with conflict.

## Management Response



UNDP accepts this recommendation, acknowledging the need for a corporate strategy for engagement in protracted crises, including strategic investments to combine thought leadership and country programming on the triple nexus. UNDP adheres to the “Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus” of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Crisis Bureau is developing a “UNDP Framework for Development Solutions for Fragility and Crisis” (working title) that will guide strategies, operations and programmes for UNDP support to fragile and crisis-affected countries. This framework will provide guidance on: where to focus – major risks and opportunities for transformative change in fragile contexts; what to do – linking to important UNDP technical offers in areas such as prevention, peacebuilding, governance, rule of law, human rights, disaster risk reduction, human mobility and recovery; and how to work – to ensure that UNDP is fit for purpose for these difficult operating environments. The framework will enhance UNDP engagement in relevant global policy and advocacy, highlight areas of focus to deliver specialized support in fragile contexts, and support more joined-up and demand-driven support from UNDP in fragile and crisis contexts.

# FORWARD



Following the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, UNDP has identified migration as a priority theme and set up a cross-practice, cross-bureau task team on migration and displacement. In 2020, every regional bureau developed a regional workplan on migration and displacement, aligned with regional strategies and priorities. These will inform the UNDP global strategy/plan on human mobility and sustainable development within the framework of the current and next strategic plans. Specifically, in the Africa region, UNDP will continue to build on the partnership with UNHCR in the Nigeria regional refugee-response plans, 2019-2020, using this as an entry point for broader collaboration in the Sahel region.

Furthermore, the resilience-based development approach that UNDP has been promoting since 2013 under the 3RP, is fully aligned with the new way of working and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus through its emphasis on local/national ownership and capacity strengthening, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion. As part of its support to the joint UNDP-UNHCR 3RP secretariat, UNDP has continuously invested in building evidence on the operationalization of the nexus under the 3RP (including more recently a paper on Localised Resilience in Action: Responding the Regional Syria Crisis, launched in March 2019) to highlight achievements in support of commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit. UNDP also produced two compendiums highlighting innovative practices, including partnerships, that can inform current and future nexus-based policy and programme design, making clear that working at this nexus is no longer “business as usual”. UNDP acknowledges the importance of fully mainstreaming the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in the monitoring and reporting processes of the 3RP at regional and country levels, and of continuous evidence building and learning in this critical area.

Outside the 3RP framework, UNDP has supported strategic thinking and dialogue on the implementation of the nexus in the Arab States region; since May 2020, UNDP and IOM have been co-leading the newly established regional issue-based coalition on the humanitarian-development nexus,



## Recommendation

2

which brings together more than 10 United Nations agencies to provide strategic guidance, identify and share good practices to advance nexus-based programmatic approaches in countries in the region affected by conflict or crisis.

**UNDP should build on its 3RP experience on municipal assessments to prioritize data and subnational assessments that would inform humanitarian, development and nexus initiatives as well as the consolidation of data for the SDGs.**

Learning from the 3RP experience, in conflict and refugee contexts, UNDP should prioritize support to data for the SDGs as well as the capacities to collect, manage, analyse and feed the data into policy processes. UNDP has supported the development and conflict-sensitivity analysis at the municipal level in countries hosting refugees but needs a streamlined approach to institutionalize data-collection processes and ensure uniformity and quality to be able to link them to the SDGs and policy processes. UNDP should forge corporate-level collaborations with United Nations agencies to avoid duplication of efforts at the country and local levels.

## Management Response



UNDP accepts this recommendation, acknowledging the efficacy of linking data from municipal assessments with data related to the Sustainable Development Goals to inform policy and programming, while recognizing the need to invest in ensuring coherence and comparability in the data sets. As part of the UNDP-UNHCR Global Joint Action Plan, a joint tool for forced displacement situations is being developed and will be piloted in selected countries. Building on the UNDP role as integrator of the Goals, the tool is expected to help countries and United Nations country teams conduct analyses and collect data focusing on protractedly displaced populations and host communities to identify those most marginalized and left behind. The data will be used to inform joint humanitarian and development assessments and refugee-response programming at the local and national levels, with the Goals as the overall framework.

Municipalities are at the forefront of the response to the Syria regional crisis by ensuring the delivery of basic services to all (including Syrian refugees), and therefore assistance to municipalities is critical in promoting social cohesion and strengthening the resilience of local systems. Municipal assessments and interventions implemented by 3RP partners in Lebanon and Turkey have been collected and analysed. In Lebanon, UNDP has been key in developing the vulnerability map to identify priority municipalities for interventions, making a direct link with the wider work of UNDP on poverty data in

the country. In Turkey, UNDP, UNHCR, IOM and local authorities organized the Gaziantep Municipal Forum in 2019, with the aim of sharing good practices on municipal strategies for addressing migration and displacement; showcasing the role of municipalities in linking refugee and resilience responses. In 2018, UNDP also published a report highlighting its support to municipal resilience in Turkey to increase the capacities of municipalities to respond to additional demands for services for Syrian refugees and host communities.

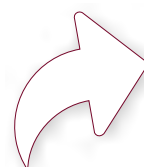
Building upon the interest generated among 3RP partners by the pilot workshop on vulnerability and resilience held in December 2020, UNDP will continue supporting improvements and harmonization of approaches to monitoring resilience under the 3RP, including strengthening linkages with monitoring and localization efforts for the Sustainable Development Goals.

**UNDP should play a catalytic role in enabling private sector solutions to promote the resilience of both host communities and Syrian refugees. UNDP should develop private sector country strategies as its 3RP offering, to address context-specific issues and institutional bottlenecks; and develop mechanisms to derisk the policy environment to facilitate investments for sustainable livelihoods and employment.**

The UNDP corporate private sector strategy was approved recently and assessments were carried out to inform its engagement with the private sector in crisis contexts. Moving forward, UNDP should be consistent in the implementation of private sector development initiatives in 3RP countries, prioritizing this as a key offering. UNDP should strengthen its capacities to increase the pace of its engagement with appropriate tools, particularly in contexts of conflict in the least developed countries. UNDP should adapt tools for engaging the private sector in value chain development and investment in the service sector, and where possible, leverage impact investment, capacities and policy frameworks. UNDP should partner with financial intermediaries that are expanding their businesses in areas of UNDP support.

One of the areas of UNDP strength in 3RP countries is substantive engagement at the local level, which should be used to leverage private sector engagement in addressing development challenges. To be successful, there should be considerable flexibility in the use of tools, combining long-term goals with short-term milestones.

### 3 Recommendation



## Management Response



UNDP accepts this recommendation, noting that its private sector strategy seeks, in partnership with Governments, civil society and business associations and networks, to make markets work for the Sustainable Development Goals, with a strong emphasis on the inclusion of the poor and marginalized communities. This strategy builds upon the long-standing adoption by UNDP of a market system approach, which is also the main basis for the work on private sector development and partnerships championed by a number of other international agencies. It is deploying a suite of service offers, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies in areas such as sustainable value chains and inclusive business, gender equality in markets, digital finance and closing the energy gap.

UNDP recognizes the opportunity to expand the offer on private sector engagement in forced displacement situations. At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, one of the UNDP commitments was to promote decent work to drive forward the self-reliance of refugees and host communities as part of the UNDP digital transformation. UNDP, UNHCR and Microsoft are currently collaborating to bring together innovative digital initiatives that foster the economic inclusion of refugees. Furthermore, both organizations are developing, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a project proposal within this framework to develop a suite of solutions and services that can be used by Governments, UNDP country offices and partners to catalyse digitally-enabled livelihood opportunities for crisis-affected people.

The aim of these solutions and services is to achieve the four elements required to facilitate digitally-enabled livelihoods: ensuring an enabling policy and regulatory environment for digital transformation; promoting investment and innovation to make transformative technologies available; enabling access to and usage of transformative technologies for livelihood outcomes; and research, prototyping and dialogue on solutions to promote digitally-enabled livelihoods. As part of the UNDP-IOM joint programme on making migration work for sustainable development, UNDP is also leading on strengthening private sector engagement in delivering on national migration strategies.

UNDP is committed to risk-informed decision-making for private sector partnerships and has a dedicated, rigorous policy for due diligence with regard to such partnerships in its programme operations policies and procedures. All private sector partnerships are informed by a risk assessment of the proposed partner and expected outcomes, which guides senior management



in its decision-making, and are also supported as relevant by risk management and communication plans. UNDP will continue to explore ways of making it easier to maximize private sector solutions and partnerships.

In the context of the 3RP, Iraq, Turkey and Jordan have implemented livelihood programmes in partnership with the private sector to increase the employability of vulnerable populations. Several assessments have been conducted across the region to inform the engagement of 3RP with the private sector. In Lebanon, UNDP produced the “Mind the Gap” report, which examines the skill gaps that exist in the key sectors of the Lebanese economy and provides concrete recommendations on how to improve the situation. In the context of COVID-19, UNDP has a digital socioeconomic impact assessment tool tailored for assessing the impact of COVID-19 (and disasters) on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The tool provides information for evidence-based policymaking and digital solutions in this case focusing on MSMEs.

In Jordan and Turkey, UNDP conducted studies to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the private sector and local enterprises to inform the UNDP response. In Turkey, this assessment was conducted in collaboration with the “Business for Goals” platform”, which aims to develop policies with the private sector and coordinate the contributions of the private sector to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Turkey chapter of the 3RP is for the first time including formal consultation with the private sector (both Syrian-owned businesses and Turkish ones) in the 2021-2022 planning process. Meanwhile, in this new context, the UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility is exploring the possibility of integrating support to “business resilience” as a key dimension of the resilience response under the 3RP.

**UNDP should consolidate partnerships with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to promote approaches based on the humanitarian-development nexus and resilience in the Syrian refugee crisis response. UNDP and UNHCR have embarked upon a significant partnership to bridge the humanitarian-development divide and there is need for continued commitment to further strengthen this alliance.**

UNDP should further consolidate partnership with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to promote approaches based on the humanitarian-development nexus in 3RP countries and reduce compartmentalization of refugee-related development support and other development programming in the country.

4

## Recommendation

## Management Response



The joint UNHCR-UNDP action plan is an important step forward in outlining areas of global and country-level collaboration. The action plan should clarify the way forward in enabling development linkages with humanitarian initiatives at the country level, rather than programmes in two areas implemented in parallel. Lessons from 3RP will be important, particularly in developing common outcomes for future collaborations at the country level. UNDP should clarify expectations regarding its resource investments and explore cost-sharing mechanisms.

UNDP accepts this recommendation and is committed to further consolidating its partnership with UNHCR. UNDP and UNHCR have concluded two global cooperation agreements, the first in 1987 and the second and current one in 1997. In 2011, UNDP and UNHCR were designated by the Secretary-General in his decision no. 2011/20 to provide technical expertise and support to the development of the strategy for durable solutions. Most recently, in 2017, UNDP and UNHCR renewed commitments to work together in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and identified five common priority areas of work, implemented through a joint global action plan.

This has led to collaboration between UNDP-UNHCR teams at all levels, including in other contexts involving refugees and mixed migration currently spanning over 30 countries. UNDP is a member of the core group in the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Support Platform for Somali Refugees and Returnees, and has a partnership framework in the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework for the Americas.

At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, UNDP committed to working with UNHCR and with national and local governments, justice, security and human rights actors, the private sector, civil society and most importantly, with host communities and displaced populations, on prevention, peacebuilding, rule of law, local governance and digital livelihoods. Building on these efforts, UNDP and UNHCR have agreed to consolidate the partnership to develop a global joint initiative on inclusion and solutions to support the implementation of the commitments made by UNDP at the Global Refugee Forum in 40 priority countries by 2022.

The regional memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UNHCR and UNDP on the response to the Syria crisis was renewed in October 2019 for two years by the High Commissioner for Refugees and the UNDP Administrator. The MoU reiterates the commitment between UNDP and UNHCR to ensure, through the joint UNHCR/UNDP 3RP secretariat, an informed and coordinated response to the Syria crisis at regional and country levels. Jointly with UNHCR, UNDP is providing regular updates on the implementation of this partnership and related collaborative activities and outputs, as part of the monitoring process for the global UNHCR-UNDP action plan. As a follow-up action to the latest UNHCR-UNDP global update meeting (24 July 2020), the two agencies produced a joint note that provides an overview of their regional and country-level collaborations and achievements within the framework of the 3RP, along with more detailed information on some joint UNHCR-UNDP programmes in 3RP countries (specifically Turkey and Lebanon).

**UNDP jointly with UNHCR should consider scaling down the 3RP architecture so it is fit for purpose.**

An almost decade-long crisis response needs catalytic initiatives and advocacy that demonstrate a holistic approach to humanitarian challenges rather than investments primarily in a heavy 3RP coordination mechanism. Refocusing the 3RP and anchoring it in medium- to longer-term development outcomes would enable durable solutions for refugees and sustainable outcomes for the host countries. Such refocusing may necessitate alternate structures, strategic selection of intervention areas and a renewed resource mobilization agenda. Leveraging 3RP resources for additional private sector financing should be prioritized.


UNDP takes note of recommendation 5, that it should consider reformulating and scaling down the 3RP architecture. However, UNDP does not accept this recommendation. Given the protracted nature of the Syria regional crisis and the ramifications of COVID-19 for the region, a strong 3RP coordination mechanism remains more critical than ever. Addressing the increasing vulnerabilities across 3RP countries will require enhanced collaboration and coordination across different pillars and sectors. Scaling down the 3RP architecture would undermine the ability of UNDP, and other 3RP partners, to respond effectively to the crisis and its profound implications for the region. Given the growing vulnerabilities in the region and the need to update the 3RP, as outlined above, to secure its relevance, this may actually mean further

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## Recommendation



## Management Response



scaling-up the of the 3RP and its architecture with regard to scope of activities and partnerships. Furthermore, as the 3RP is co-led by UNDP and UNHCR, and includes more than 270 humanitarian and development partners, reformulating the architecture of the 3RP lies outside the scope of UNDP alone and would require joint efforts with other stakeholders.

UNDP and UNHCR organize annual intercountry/sectoral coordination meetings that bring together intersectoral coordinators from all five 3RP countries, as well as members of the 3RP Regional Technical Committee. While taking into account the diversity of country contexts, this process has proven critical in ensuring a common vision of emerging issues and programmatic priorities and adapting strategic directions in a highly changing environment. The ongoing 3RP cycle is guided by a set of four priority strategic directions (protection, durable solutions, supporting dignified lives and strengthening national and local capacities) and advocates for a greater anchorage of related 3RP interventions within longer-term national/sectoral development plans, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact on Refugees. The latest edition of the Jordan response plan, for example, fully embraces the resilience approach and integrates the Goals.

At the regional level, the UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility is proactively engaged in the UNHCR-led Regional Durable Solutions Working Group and spearheaded the launch of a new workstream, “Livelihoods and Return Preparedness”. UNDP however acknowledges the need to further stimulate strategic dialogue between UNDP and UNHCR representatives at the regional and country levels on the implementation of the MoU and other critical issues such as durable solutions. A key strength of the 3RP has been its network of 270 partners across the countries concerned including United Nations actors, Governments and both local and international NGOs. UNDP and UNHCR, as well as other 3RP partners, acknowledge the need to strengthen coordination and collaboration with other actors (e.g., International financial institutions (IFIs) and other development partners) that operate outside 3RP structures but still provide significant support to host countries and institutions. UNDP has notably supported mappings of IFI support to national and local institutions in Turkey, Lebanon and now Jordan with a view to having a more comprehensive picture of the international community’s response to the Syria refugee crisis while assessing potential gaps and areas where greater coordination and synergies are needed.

**UNDP should build partnerships to boost the scale and scope of support for gender-related initiatives. Resource constraints in addressing gender equality in refugee response are no different from challenges in development programming.**

UNDP should outline sectoral areas where it will be consistently engaged. A sectoral focus will enable UNDP to provide well-tested transformative solutions, engage the private sector and build partnerships for enhanced gender outcomes. Support for gender equality and women's empowerment needs resources. UNDP has been a pioneer in institutionalizing measures such as the minimum budget of 15 percent of programme resources for gender programming in crisis contexts, which is now a United Nations system-wide policy. UNDP should follow the standards it set and take measures to strengthen organizational capacities to appropriately respond to gender challenges.

UNDP accepts this recommendation and is committed to ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed in UNDP projects and programmes in forced displacement settings. Under outcome 3 of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, UNDP work on gender equality has focused on improving livelihoods in crisis and post-crisis settings and on increasing women's participation and leadership in prevention and recovery processes and in social dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms. In 2020, UNDP enhanced efforts to increase technical and programmatic capacities on the ground while ensuring that the 15 per cent allocation target for gender-dedicated activities is met. This includes the allocation of 15 per cent of TRAC 3 funds to support GEN3 programming and co-fund gender-related capacities in crisis countries, and a commitment to a dedicated call for country offices in crisis settings to be certified by the Gender Seal.

In 2021, the Global Policy Network will launch the Gender and Crisis Engagement Facility which will be jointly managed by the Crisis Bureau and the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support Gender Team. The facility represents an institutional commitment to harness the considerable strengths of UNDP, dedicate resources and attract donor funding with the aim of strengthening the organization's capacity to support gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis and fragile contexts. Acting as a one-stop-shop, the facility will consolidate, coordinate, communicate and bring coherence to UNDP support for gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and crisis countries, focusing on four outcome areas: women's economic empowerment; women's leadership and participation; rule of law and human rights; and a gender-responsive fragility strategy.

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## Recommendation



## Management Response





## **About the Independent Evaluation Office**

At UNDP, evaluation is critical in helping countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. By generating objective evidence, evaluation helps UNDP achieve greater accountability and facilitates improved learning from past experience. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) promotes accountability and learning by conducting independent evaluations at the country, regional, and global levels, as well as on thematic topics of particular importance to the organization. It also promotes development of evaluation capacity at the national level, and provides critical support to the work of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).



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United Nations Development Programme

**SUMMARY:**

# EVALUATION

## OF UNDP SUPPORT TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS RESPONSE AND PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED RESILIENCE APPROACH

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