

# MOUs and LOUs with partners

12 January 2024

## Key points

- UNHCR and partners have concluded several global MOUs of relevance in emergency operations. Being familiar with the terms of these agreements can greatly help partnership at field level. UNHCR can regularly consult the intranet MOU repository
- Operations in emergencies can conclude new LOUs at with strategic partners. They should, however, not sign new LOUs on issues that involve the direct transfer of funds. Other types of agreement, such as a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA), are used in those cases

## 1. Overview

UNHCR works in partnership with many different actors. It formalizes such partnerships by means of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) at global or regional level, and Letters of Understanding (LOUs) at field level – nomenclature can vary at all levels, with Letters of Agreement, Joint Letters or other names being equally used. Their purpose is to clarify roles and promote productive relationships, support strategic partnership on priorities, and provide a formal framework for cooperation. Partnerships maximize complementarities and support efficient use of capacities and resources, while defining the roles and responsibilities of the participating entities. MOUs/LOUs should also refer to coordination mechanisms as the protection working group or partner roles in the cluster system, to help structure the collaboration between the partners.

## 2. Relevance for emergency operations

In emergencies, it is important to be aware of the global and regional frameworks that apply. Operations don't need to conclude country level letters of agreement to implement the global frameworks or plans of action. Good practices at country level are typically related to thematically and operationally focused agreements that address contextualized needs. The

global arrangements may help framing these country-level arrangements, enhancing complementarities.

### 3. Main guidance

UNHCR has global Memoranda of Understanding with many UN agencies. Examples include: WFP (food supply and distribution); FAO (food security and self-reliance); WHO (health); UNFPA (reproductive health and SGBV); UNICEF (child protection); ILO (microfinance and skills training); UNDP (reintegration and post-conflict recovery), ICRC and the World Bank (data-sharing agreements).

UNHCR also has global MOUs with several major NGO partners, including NRC, DRC, LWF, and Oxfam. As with UN agency MOUs, these agreements are relevant in a variety of contexts, including emergency response. In an emergency context, the most relevant UN MoU is with WFP (2011), and the most relevant LOU is with UNICEF. Neither is relevant for the [cluster approach](#) or resources designed to assist IDPs.

The **MOU with WFP** clarifies respective roles and responsibilities in the planning, distribution and monitoring of food assistance. It is valid in contexts where more than 5,000 refugees in need of food assistance are concentrated on one or more areas of a given country.

Following the move to cash-based assistance, UNHCR and WFP signed an **MOU Addendum on cash assistance** in May 2017, and a **MOU Addendum on data sharing** in September 2018. Both addenda are extremely important wherever cash-for-food assistance is foreseen. These documents set out beneficiary targeting principles as well as detailed guidance on sharing of beneficiary data.

The [2023 UNHCR-UNICEF Strategic Collaboration Framework \(SCF\)](#) sets out the joint ambition to promote the inclusion of refugee children and their families in national plans, budgets, datasets and service delivery systems. The SCF is applicable globally, wherever UNICEF and UNHCR are present. The framework commits both organizations to a series of goals on inclusion of refugee children in national systems, such as education, water and sanitation, child protection, social protection and data; and on elimination of childhood statelessness – all by 2030. It also supports the continuation and strengthening of UNHCR and UNICEF collaboration in other areas, including nutrition and health.

The **LOU guidance and template for partnering with UNICEF** provides a general basis for collaboration, with particular reference to [WASH](#), [health/nutrition](#), [child protection](#), and [education](#). The template includes a Joint Action Plan that provides clarity at operational level for a specific timeframe.

The **MOU with WHO** clarifies what technical support and normative guidance WHO will provide UNHCR and Ministries of Health to assist a host Government to extend national health services to refugees.

The **MOU with IOM** outlines what evacuation support will be offered in emergencies to persons of concern, [third country nationals](#), stranded migrants, and others. There are regular Joint Letters

issued to all staff by the two Principals, the last one in January 2019.

The **Framework Agreement on Personal Data Protection between ICRC and UNHCR** of 2021 sets out the terms and conditions under which either Party shares personal data with the other Party. It should be complemented by Implementing Agreements. However, exceptions are possible in cases of urgency, security or other similar circumstances.

## **Annexes**

[UNHCR - WFP MOU January, 2011](#)

[WFP Addendum on cash assistance, 2011](#)

[WFP Addendum on data sharing, 2018](#)

[UNHCR - WHO MOU, 2020](#)

## **4. Links**

[UNHCR - WFP MOU, 2011](#) [UNHCR - WFP cash addendum, 2011](#) [UNHCR - WFP Addendum on Data Sharing, 2011](#) [UNICEF - UNHCR Strategic Collaboration Framework, 2023](#) [UNHCR - WHO MOU, 2020](#)

## **5. Main contacts**

For general questions, contact the Partnership and Coordination Service: [hqng00@unhcr.org](mailto:hqng00@unhcr.org)