UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | EMERGENCY HANDBOOK

# Inter-agency Refugee Response Plans (RRPs)

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## Key points

- An RRP is an inter-agency planning, coordination and fundraising tool that supports host governments in providing protection and assistance to refugees, the communities hosting them and other relevant population groups in large and complex emergencies through international solidarity.
- It is designed to assist UNHCR and partners to operationalize the Refugee Coordination Model (consult entry RCM) and reflects UNHCR's facilitation and convening role, as set out in its mandate and the Global Compact on Refugees.
- Country RRPs reflect the needs of all refugee populations hosted in a country. In emergency situations, a country RRP can also be developed targeting one refugee population or covering a specific geographic area, reflecting the context, the protection and solutions strategy, and the inter-agency response to the new emergency.
- Regional RRPs are developed under the leadership of a Regional Refugee Coordinator and consist of a regional overview and country chapters summarizing the protection and solutions strategies and inter-agency responses related to a specific refugee population at the country level.
- It is essential to involve the government and the whole humanitarian community, refugees and host community from the start of an emergency in preparing the RRP.
- Ensure that requirements by agencies are realistic, match presence and capacity in the country, and can be implemented within the RRP timelines. Avoid duplication or overlaps in budgeting. When agencies issue their own appeals, take account of requirements that might be included in the budgets of UNHCR or other UN agencies.
- Draft RRPs in language that is agency-neutral and avoid focusing on agency-specific planning.

# 1. Overview

An RRP is inter-agency planning, coordination and fundraising tool that supports host governments in providing protection and assistance to refugees in large and complex emergencies through international solidarity. It is designed to assist UNHCR and partners in operationalizing the **Refugee Coordination Model** (RCM).

The RRP articulates the protection and solution priorities and describes the needs of refugees and their host communities, outlines how and by whom these needs will be addressed, and defines the collective financial requirements of all RRP partners. RRPs reflect UNHCR's facilitation and convening role, as set out in its mandate and the Global Compact on Refugees, build on host government approaches and capacities, involve a wide array of actors[1] and incorporate refugee and host communities' abilities.

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[1] Including UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs, refugee-led organizations, sports organizations, development entities, and private sector actors, among others.

# 2. Main guidance

**Purpose and scope**

An RRP is prepared in situations where the scale of a refugee crisis requires a formal coordinated inter-agency response plan. The RRP sets out a strategy and implementation plan that provides a framework for all partners involved. The strategy should be guided by the principle of 'inclusion from the start', where immediate actions in the emergency phase are selected and designed to facilitate later inclusion of refugees in national systems and services. The planning process should be inclusive, building on partner's comparative advantage to produce a complementary combination of interventions to respond to refugee emergencies in various contexts. The plan serves as advocacy tool and seeks to mobilise international support and funding for the collective response, and raise the profile of the emergency response for more visibility of refugee and host community needs. While an RRP is developed in close collaboration and consultation with relevant government counterparts in countries of asylum, it should not include financial requirements of host governments.

Refugees should be included in the response design and implementation of an RRP along with other partners to ensure responses are needs-driven and impactful. It is also necessary to capitalize on networks of local NGOs, refugee-led organizations, development, and private sector actors. For further guidance see Localization in UNHCR-led Coordination Structures (July 2023).

**Country RRPs** reflect the needs of all refugee populations hosted in a country. In emergency situations, a country RRP can also be developed targeting one refugee population or covering a specific geographic area, reflecting the context, the protection and solutions strategy, the inter-agency response to the new emergency. These are developed and coordinated under the

leadership of the host country, where possible, and the Refugee Coordinator, who is typically the UNHCR Country Representative.

**Regional RRPs** are developed in situations involving more than one refugee-hosting country, under the leadership of a Regional Refugee Coordinator, typically the UNHCR Regional Bureau Director, to ensure a coherent engagement of all actors within an overarching vision for protection and solutions. Regional RRPs consist of a regional overview and country chapters summarizing the protection and solutions strategies and inter-agency responses related to a specific refugee population at the country level.

An RRP can also be adapted for mixed refugee and migrant situations, resulting in a **Refugee and Migrant Response Plan**, typically co-led by UNHCR and IOM, in response to the challenges related to identifying and protecting refugees within broader population movements.

Depending on the context of the displacement situation and the capacity of host communities, the RRP focuses on reinforcing and supporting national structures, where conditions permit.

The response plan should be pillared on broadening partnerships and channel efforts to achieve the **Global Compact on Refugees (GRF)** objectives, underpinned by the **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)** and incorporating the humanitarian-development and peace nexus into the response.

Country Plans and Country Chapters of Regional RRPs should be reviewed and vetted by country MFT and Senior Management. This is followed by review from the Regional Bureau and UNHCR DER / Partnerships and Coordination Service (plan 10 days for PCS review) that is consulting relevant Divisions/Services in HQ as required.

**Note:** An RRP does not cover UNHCR's involvement in internal displacement caused by conflicts or natural disaster. These are covered by the IASC cluster approach system in a separate planning process led by the Humanitarian Coordinator and supported by OCHA. UNHCR may be a partner in these responses as member of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and potentially as a cluster lead. Please consult the entries on the IASC Cluster Approach and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle for more information. In mixed settings situations where refugee situations coexist with other humanitarian crises, including those involving internally displaced people, UNHCR works in close partnership with the wider UN humanitarian system, guided by the Joint UNHCR-OCHA "Note on Mixed Situations" (2014). The Joint Note provides a flexible framework for determining how best to organize coordination.

The RRP:

- Provides partners with a platform and tools to coordinate an inter-agency refugee response and engage additional partners;
- Sets out a monitoring framework to understand progress towards planned results and allow for corrective action where necessary.
- Raises the profile of the refugee response and enhances refugee inclusion in national and local development plans and policies;
- Mobilizes resources for operationally engaged partners by providing donors with a jointly agreed plan;

- Provides the host government and donors with an overview of actors and actions in the refugee response within an overarching common vision and coherent engagement in pursuit of protection and solutions.
- Aligns with other planning frameworks, such as national development plans and UNSDCFs, which sets the groundwork for an eventual transition of the refugee response out of the RRP and RCM framework.

**Operational cycle**

**Needs assessments**: An RRP is developed through the country coordination structures and is based on evidence and findings from needs assessments. The needs assessment for refugee emergencies (NARE) is designed to assist in setting up initial multi-sectoral needs assessments when there has been a significant sudden, forced displacement of populations across borders. Through joint assessments and analysis, RRP partners step up cooperation, exchange information and shape a common understanding of challenges and interventions. Assessments should consult refugee and host communities about their needs, capacities and possible solutions.

**Plan development:** Within the refugee response structures, the Refugee Coordinator engages stakeholders to develop an emergency inter-agency RRP within the first week of the situation to cover the first three to six months. When the situation persists, the RRP is reviewed and extended, aligned with the calendar year. Based on jointly agreed planning assumptions and broad strategic objectives, the RRP sets out the comprehensive protection, multi-sectoral assistance and solutions strategy for the refugee response based on the feedback of refugees and affected communities; priority areas of intervention; comprehensive financial requirements; and a reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework. Sector working groups determine sector-specific objectives and activities within the overall protection strategy based on sector-level assessments.

Sector plans should provide:

- A situation analysis for the sector;
- An overview of needs and vulnerabilities;
- Planning figures for assistance-targeted populations, disaggregated by age, gender and, where relevant, location;
- List of intervention locations;
- Key assumptions that affect the work of the sector (such as government policies, refugee specific needs and protection related risks, security issues, etc.);
- Monitoring framework
- Financial requirements, disaggregated by partner.

**Information Management:** In an early stage in the RRP planning process, UNHCR will reinforce its country data and information management capacity. Data portals facilitate coordination and information-sharing among stakeholders engaged in the response. Online inter-agency RRP portal (operational data portals: Operational Data Portal (unhcr.org)) should be established with the support of UNHCR HQ. In addition, as part of UNHCR's information management and dissemination role, field operations should produce external inter-agency operational updates to

report on the progress achieved by all agencies in the country and regional RRPs, separate from UNHCR-specific updates.

**Monitoring and reporting on results:** Every RRP should have a monitoring framework that sets out the indicators (and their targets), as well as the process and tools for collecting data, analyzing, using and disseminating the monitoring findings. RRP partners monitor the progress of the planned results via the monitoring framework. Detailed guidance on establishing and implementing a monitoring framework for an RRP is available in the RRP Monitoring Guidance. UNHCR operations include RRP indicators in their country strategy results framework and M&E plan. For alignment between sectors and UNHCR outcome areas see the following guide: How RRP Sectors correspond to UNHCR Outcome Areas.

**Fundraising**: While the RRP is not linked to a pooled fund and while activities in an RRP are not guaranteed funding, donors do favour funding activities that are part of a single vetted inter-agency strategic response plan coordinated with host governments, complementing their action. The (Regional) Refugee Coordinator, Refugee Coordination Forum and sector coordinators create opportunities to publicize the RRP and the partners' resource requirements, contributions and impacts. They also seek to engage with donors by keeping them informed about operational and political developments related to the RRP, such as achievements, constraints, funding gaps, and ways to support advocacy efforts.

**Fund tracking**: As the lead coordinating agency, UNHCR is responsible for tracking funding received for the RRPs and for sharing inter-agency funding updates. The Refugee Funding Tracker (RFT) was developed by UNHCR as a platform compiling all financial data related to refugee programmes. All partners, including UN agencies, NGOs and others appealing for funds within a RRP, must report the funds they receive against their requirements. Reporting on funding received is essential to portray an accurate picture of the funding gaps for the host governments, donors, and partners throughout the year.

**Recap**

An RRP includes:

- A situation analysis, including contextual information and maps;
- Planning figures;
- An overview of the needs and vulnerabilities of the refugees, host communities and other persons of concern as relevant;
- Strategic protection and solutions priorities;
- Key sector specific responses by partners, and their responsibilities;
- Indicators with baselines and targets for each planned result (Monitoring Framework);
- Inter-agency budget;
- Coordination arrangements.

A regional RRP includes:

- Regional planning  figures and strategic protection and solutions objectives;
- A plan or chapter for refugee-hosting country;
- Regional working group and sector arrangements;

- Inter-agency financial requirements, broken down by country of asylum and sector;
- Regional coordination arrangements.

## Post emergency phase

While the RRP primarily capture humanitarian activities, national and international development and peace actors are coherently involved in the RRPs from the start of a response, as per nexus efforts. Depending on the country context, this means that RRP partners need to establish a timeline and steps or benchmarks to link or embed longer-term refugee inclusion objectives in national or local development plans, UNSDCF or other frameworks of relevance, while maintaining UNHCR's mandated responsibilities and accountabilities.

The UN Development System reform and the strengthened role of the Resident Coordinator (RC) has presented UNHCR and RRP partners with opportunities to work with the RCs to advance the inclusion of refugees and solutions in countries of origin, as part of the commitment to leave no one behind, and to facilitate the engagement of development actors in refugee responses.

Other frameworks to engage with in transition settings include the comprehensive approaches proposed within the Global Compact on Refugees' "Programme of Action", and the regional and national support platforms for thematic engagement (MIRPS, IGAD, SSAR, CAR) encouraging regional cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination for a greater responsibility-sharing in matters of prevention, protection and durable solutions. These mechanisms integrate cooperating States in the platforms and work alongside regional and international organizations committed to the humanitarian and development agenda.

## RRP Action Plan

- Following a decision to develop an RRP, UNHCR, the government and RRP partners agree on a detailed timeline for preparing an RRP and a coordination mechanism, determining sector co-coordinating agencies.

- The Refugee Coordinator forms a small core strategy group composed of senior representatives of response agencies and convenes a strategy meeting. This group prepares a situation analysis, develops the planning scenario and assumptions, reviews the protection and solutions priorities and establishes the strategic objectives. These are communicated to sector co-coordinators and sector members.

- The draft RRP should include the financial requirements of agencies participating in the response by sector. The RRP is based on available evidence and a needs analysis.

- Circulate a consolidated draft for review to the core strategy group and all response agencies, including government counterparts.

- The Refugee Coordinator provides a consolidated RRP draft to UNHCR the Regional Bureau and headquarters for review.

- Thereafter, the Refugee Coordinator shares the draft with the participating agencies for information and further feedback. At that stage, a validation meeting could be organized among all the partners involved.

- The Refugee Coordinator, in cooperation with UNHCR headquarters, reviews and integrates the comments of other agencies;  upon approval by the UNHCR Regional Bureau Director and headquarters, the RRP is finalized and prepared for launch.

- The RRP is launched where possible with the host government, partners, as well as donors and other stakeholders; if possible and where appropriate, with the OCHA HRP.

# 3. Links

RRP 2025 Guidance Note RRP page of the RCM website RRPs on the UNHCR Operational Data Portal Accessible to UNHCR staff only: UNHCR Intranet Site on RRPs

# 4. Main contacts

Contact the UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service: hqng00@unhcr.org