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Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Background Guide 2026

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Maddie Emery and Assistant Director Johanna Kaufhold (Conference A), and Director Tobias Willms and Assistant Director Romina Trujillo A. (Conference B). Maddie holds a B.A. in International Relations from Austin College and currently works in the government relations field. Johanna studied International Relations and Economic Policy and now works for a German development agency in the field of multilateral development banks. Tobias is a fully qualified lawyer in Germany and holds a Magister's degree in Law from the University of Heidelberg as well as a Master of Laws (LL.M.) from the University of Dublin. During his legal clerkship, he gained experience at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations in New York and at an international law firm in London. Romina studies Human Development Counseling with a concentration in Mental Health and Multicultural Counseling at University of Illinois Springfield (UIS). Romina currently works as an intern with a private practice in Springfield, IL. as well as the graduate assistant for the International and Global Studies program at UIS. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Aliyah Edwards (Conference A) and Mariana G. Marañón Laguna (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Furthering the Rights of Displaced Persons in the Context of the 2030 Agenda
2. The Provision of Sustainable Housing and Settlement for Refugees

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 PM ET on 1 March 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsq.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Maddie Emery, Director
Johanna Kaufhold, Assistant Director
Conference A

Tobias Willms, Director
Romina Trujillo A., Assistant Director
Conference B



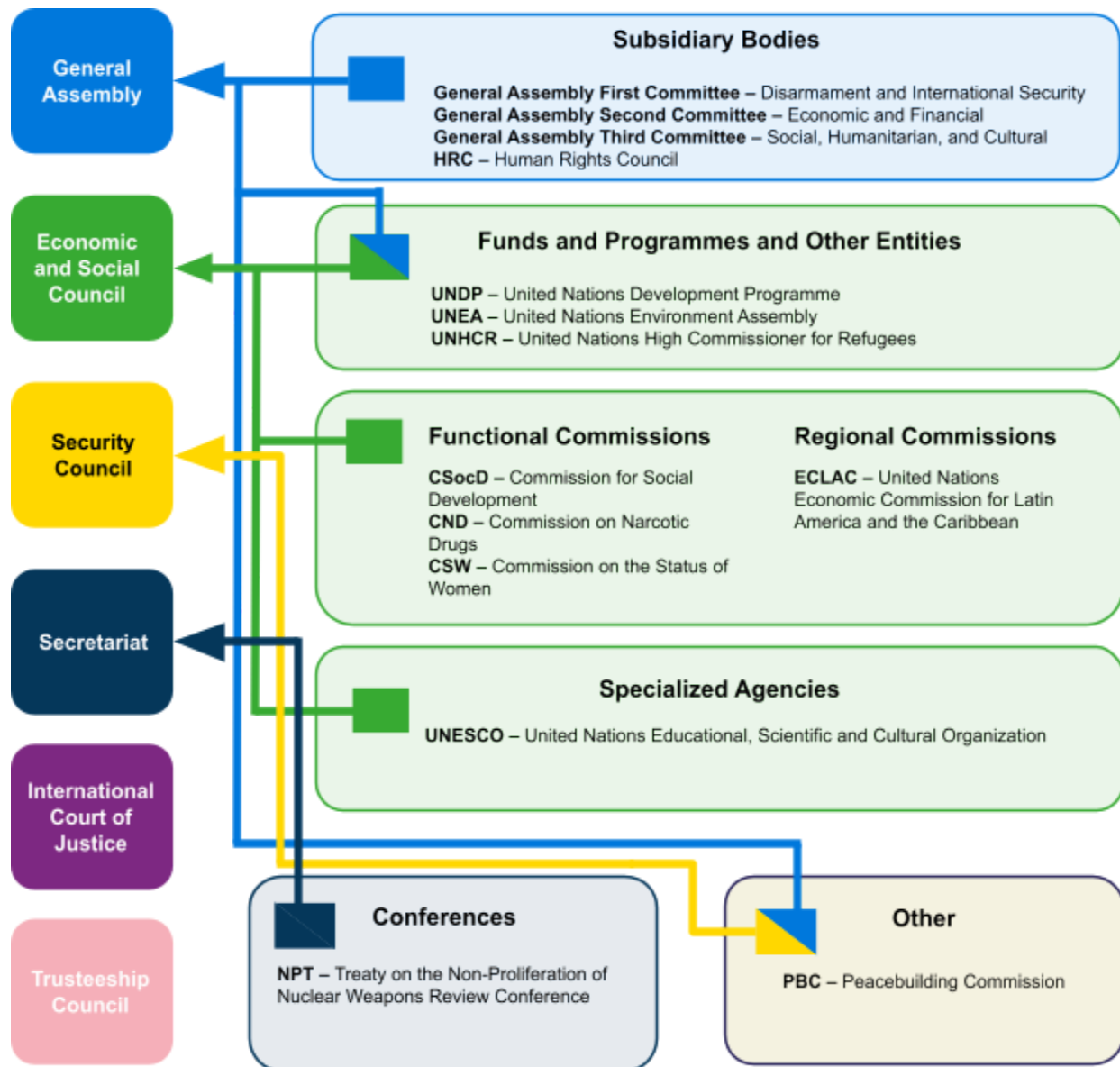
Table of Contents

United Nations System at NMUN-NY.....	1
Committee Overview.....	2
Introduction.....	2
Mandate, Function, and Powers.....	2
Governance, Funding, and Structure.....	3
Bibliography.....	5
1. Furthering the Rights of Displaced Persons in the Context of the 2030 Agenda.....	7
Introduction.....	7
International and Regional Framework.....	8
Role of the International System.....	10
Strengthening the Rights of Women Experiencing Displacement.....	12
Furthering Access to Healthcare for All Displaced Persons.....	14
Conclusion.....	16
Further Research.....	16
Bibliography.....	17
2. The Provision of Sustainable Housing and Settlement for Refugees.....	24
Introduction.....	24
International and Regional Framework.....	26
Role of the International System.....	27
Facilitating Integration Through Sustainable Housing.....	30
Capacity-Building for Sustainable Housing and Settlement.....	31
Conclusion.....	33
Further Research.....	33
Bibliography.....	34



United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the leading United Nations entity for people forced to flee their homes.¹ The United Nations General Assembly established the body in 1950 to address the high number of displaced Europeans after World War II and initially gave the body a three-year mandate.² After extending the mandate every five years until 2003, the General Assembly decided to prolong UNHCR's mandate indefinitely.³

Most of UNHCR's resources are dedicated to field operations that address the needs of forcibly displaced persons, including 42.7 million refugees, 73.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and 8.4 million asylum seekers.⁴ UNHCR is also mandated to protect the 4.4 million stateless people globally.⁵ UNHCR provides a variety of humanitarian aid, including food and nutritional supplements, basic and long-term shelter and housing, cash assistance, and legal services.⁶ While immediate assistance in crises constitutes a large portion of the body's work, UNHCR's larger goal is to help displaced persons find durable solutions to rebuild their lives.⁷

Mandate, Function, and Powers

UNHCR's mandate is to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, and promote permanent solutions for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.⁸ UNHCR reports annually to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁹ In 2016, the General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (New York Declaration), which established the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), a global plan to guarantee refugees' rights that serves as the predominant framing tool for UNHCR's Global Compact for Refugees (Global Compact).¹⁰ The Global Compact, which was drafted in 2018 and affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, is the United Nations's current agreement guiding the international approach to assisting refugees.¹¹

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *About UNHCR*. 2024.

² United Nations, General Assembly. *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*. 1949; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *History of UNHCR*. 2024.

³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementing actions proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to strengthen the capacity of his Office to carry out its mandate (A/RES/58/153)*. 2004.

⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Figures at a glance*. 2025.

⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Who we Protect: Stateless People*. 2025.

⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Protection*. 2024.

⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Solutions*. 2024.

⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 2010. p. 2; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *About UNHCR*. 2024.

⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Governance and Oversight*. 2024.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 16-24; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The global compact on refugees: UNHCR Quick Guide*. 2018. p. 2; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The Global Compact on Refugees*. 2024.

¹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Part II: Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12(Part II))*. 2018; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Refugee Forum*. 2024.



While the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of UNHCR can be summarized as:

- UNHCR will generally: provide international protection and humanitarian assistance in partnership with governments, other United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations; supervise the implementation of refugee instruments; assist or make recommendations to Member States in enacting or revising national refugee legislation, including administrative procedures and operational guidelines; advocate for the creation of new measures against displacements and statelessness.¹²
- UNHCR will not generally: unilaterally direct Member States, NGOs, and other United Nations bodies to implement actions; enforce the implementation of refugee instruments in Member States.¹³

To achieve its work, UNHCR collaborates with national governments, NGOs, community-based organizations, and the private sector.¹⁴ UNHCR also partners with other United Nations organizations such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹⁵

The UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026 (2022) guides the current work of UNHCR.¹⁶ In the document, UNHCR reaffirmed its commitment to achieving its five strategic directions (protect, respond, include, empower, and solve) and further identified eight areas for additional, accelerated, and targeted action in its pursuit to develop the comprehensive approaches outlined by the CRRF and the Global Compact.¹⁷

Governance, Funding, and Structure

UNHCR is governed by the Member States of the Executive Committee (ExCom).¹⁸ ExCom approves the agency's annual program priorities and budget.¹⁹ ExCom meets every October to review financial matters for the coming year, advise the High Commissioner, authorize appeals for funds, and approve upcoming targets for UNHCR.²⁰ ExCom members are elected by ECOSOC according to equitable geographical allocations and is composed of 110 Member States.²¹ The committee reports directly to the General Assembly Third Committee and follows directives issued by either the General Assembly or ECOSOC.²²

¹² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR's mandate for refugees, stateless persons and IDPs*. 2024.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Additional partnerships*. 2024.

¹⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UN and International Institutions*. 2024.

¹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026*. 2024.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Governance and Oversight*. 2024.

¹⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. 2010. p. 2.

²⁰ Ibid; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Executive Committee*. 2024.

²¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme*. 2025.

²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *ExCom membership by date of admission of members*. 2024.



UNHCR's funding comes almost entirely from voluntary contributions of Member States, intergovernmental institutions, corporations, foundations, and individuals.²³ To acquire these donations, UNHCR releases an annual Global Appeal that provides detailed information regarding significant areas of concern for UNHCR, as well as Supplementary Appeals that address specific situations.²⁴ The budget also includes contributions from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund for situations requiring immediate response, such as a natural disaster or violent conflict.²⁵

²³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Planning, Funding and Results: Budget and expenditure*. 2025; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Planning, Funding and Results: Donors*. 2025; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Additional partnerships*. 2024.

²⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Appeal 2024*. 2024.

²⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UN and International Institutions*. 2024.



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<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/55600/unhcrs-mandate-for-refugees-stateless-persons-and-idps>

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<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/excom-members-and-standing-committee-observers-english.pdf>

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1. Furthering the Rights of Displaced Persons in the Context of the 2030 Agenda

Introduction

Five years before the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) (2030 Agenda) is set to expire, one in every 67 people on Earth is forcibly displaced.²⁶ Forced displacement describes individuals and communities who are forced to flee their homes to avoid armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights abuses, and natural or man-made disasters.²⁷ Over the last ten years, worldwide displacement has doubled from roughly 62 million people displaced in 2015 to 123.2 million people displaced at the end of 2024.²⁸ In April 2025, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that displacement decreased by 1%, being the first decrease in over a decade.²⁹ Many of those currently fleeing are refugees, who are forced to seek safety in another country and are unable to return to their home country because of feared persecution, conflict, or violence.³⁰ There were 30.9 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate in 2024 alone.³¹ Moreover, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs), those who are forced to flee their homes but remain within the borders of their own country, increased by 6.3 million to 73.5 million in 2024, making up 60% of all displaced persons.³² UNHCR notes that 8.2 million IDPs returned to their homes in 2024, marking the second-highest total to be recorded, with 5 million recorded in 2023.³³ Due to ongoing instability across the globe, many displaced persons are stuck in a cycle of repeated displacement and conflict, making a sustainable return unattainable.³⁴

Without strengthening the rights of displaced persons, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved.³⁵ Forced displacement leads to and accentuates intersecting development issues, those being poverty and restricted rights that are exacerbated in displacement contexts.³⁶ In fact, many displaced persons live in poverty without access to health services and equal opportunities, correlating with SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), and SDG 5 (gender equality).³⁷ Women and girls make up approximately half of all refugees and IDPs, and in 2022, 57.6 million women and girls were forcibly displaced, causing them to live in humanitarian crises, increasing the risk of gender-based violence (GBV).³⁸ It is estimated that more than 60 million women and girls were forced to flee their homes in 2024, with women and girls accounting for 95% of the verified sexual violence cases.³⁹ Furthermore, climate-displaced people are forced to flee due to climate stressors, whether that be within

²⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global trends*. 2025.

²⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. 2010. p. 137.

²⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global trends*. 2025.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Who we protect - Refugees*. 2025.

³¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global trends*. 2025.

³² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Number of people uprooted by war at shocking, decade-high levels*. 2025.

³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global trends*. 2025.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Millions of women and girls forced to flee face high risks of gender-based violence: UNHCR*. 2024.



their country or across international borders.⁴⁰ According to the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), climate and environmental disasters were the leading contributors to the 40.5 million, or 75% of the total population of IDPs in 2021.⁴¹ It is currently estimated that 1.2 billion people are at risk of displacement by 2050, highlighting the importance of achieving SDG 13 (climate action).⁴²

With international collaboration, the SDGs can be achieved through protecting the rights of displaced persons.⁴³ UNHCR collaborates with more than 900 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), further promoting international collaboration and achieving SDG 17 (partnerships for goals).⁴⁴ As such, UNHCR participates in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), amongst other United Nations entities, to coordinate humanitarian assistance.⁴⁵ For instance, UNHCR fully engages in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, establishing tools to aid inter-agency responses in humanitarian crises at the international level.⁴⁶ Through UNHCR's partnerships and international collaboration, UNHCR has the support needed to help protect displaced persons' rights and drive change globally.⁴⁷

International and Regional Framework

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) codifies the rights of displaced persons as human rights, deserving the utmost protection.⁴⁸ The right to life, liberty, and security of a person, as stipulated in Article 3, is endangered when people are forced to flee.⁴⁹ Further, IDPs cannot enjoy freedom of residence, and refugees cannot return to their home country without encountering severe threats, both of which are protected rights under Article 13.⁵⁰ Article 14 protects the right to seek asylum in another country.⁵¹ To ensure the continued protection of displaced persons, UNHCR was established in 1949 through General Assembly resolution 319 (IV) on "Refugees and stateless persons".⁵² The resolution prescribes UNHCR to promote international refugee conventions and coordinate assistance efforts from governments, voluntary agencies, and private organizations.⁵³

International law protects displaced persons as a particularly vulnerable group.⁵⁴ The *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951) (1951 Convention) establishes fundamental rights of refugees and requires that they not be discriminated against.⁵⁵ This encompasses the right to work, education, and

⁴⁰ International Refugee Assistance Project. *21st Century Law for the 21st Century Migration: The Climate Displacement Program*. 2022. p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 3.

⁴² Ibid. p. 3.

⁴³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UN and international institutions*. N.d.

⁴⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Non-governmental organizations*. N.d.

⁴⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UN and international institutions*. N.d.

⁴⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Humanitarian Protection Cycle (IASC)*. 2025.

⁴⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Governments*. N.d.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Refugees and stateless persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*. 1949.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Public Health, Access to Healthcare*. N.d.

⁵⁵ United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951.



adequate housing.⁵⁶ It also prohibits returning a refugee to a country where they would face serious harm, which is the principle of non-refoulement.⁵⁷ This principle belongs to customary international law that binds all Member States regardless of their ratification status to the 1951 Convention.⁵⁸ In 1967, the *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* was added to ensure universal application to all refugees, independent of geographic origin.⁵⁹ Regionally, the African Union (AU) upholds the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (OAU Convention). The OAU Convention obliges AU Member States to receive refugees, secure their settlement, and cooperate in granting asylum within the AU.⁶⁰ In 2009, this was supplemented by the AU *Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa* (Kampala Convention).⁶¹ It calls to stop political, economic, and social exclusion to prevent internal displacement.⁶² Additionally, the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico, and Panama adopted the *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* (1984).⁶³ Besides adopting national refugee protection laws, this declaration urges Latin American states to disseminate knowledge about refugee protection norms through universities and centers of higher education.⁶⁴

The continued protection of displaced persons plays a large role in achieving the 2030 Agenda.⁶⁵ In 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, an action plan for development, building partnerships, and protecting all life on Earth.⁶⁶ The 2030 Agenda’s 17 SDGs provide direction for distinct fields, such as SDG 1, SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3, and SDG 5.⁶⁷ Including displaced persons in efforts to reduce poverty and eradicate hunger will help achieve SDG target 1.4 on “equal rights to economic resources, property and land ownership”, SDG target 1.5 on “reducing exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic shocks”, and SDG target 2.1 on “ensuring vulnerable people’s access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round”.⁶⁸ Forced displacement also undermines the achievement of SDG target 3.8 on “universal health coverage” because many displaced persons lack access to health

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *About UNHCR - The 1951 Refugee Convention*. 2025.

⁵⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Committee. *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1967.

⁶⁰ Organisation of African Unity. *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. 1969.

⁶¹ Special Summit of the African Union. *Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)*. 2009.

⁶² Ibid. p. 10.

⁶³ Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama. *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*. 1984.

⁶⁴ Ibid. pp. 36, 38.

⁶⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025.

⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 15.



services due to their legal status.⁶⁹ Additionally, displaced persons face a higher risk of battling mental illnesses and disorders, correlating to SDG target 3.4 on “reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases and promoting mental health”.⁷⁰ Furthermore, displacement exacerbates existing discrimination and violence against women and girls, thereby jeopardising the achievement of SDG target 5.1 on “ending all forms of discrimination against women” and of SDG target 5.2 on “eliminating all forms of violence against women”.⁷¹

Role of the International System

UNHCR is the leading global actor protecting the rights and welfare of displaced persons.⁷² Its Global Report provides an annual overview of UNHCR’s activities and achievements.⁷³ The latest report counted 43 displacement emergencies in 25 countries, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, South Sudan, and Ukraine.⁷⁴ This underscores the urgency of General Assembly resolution 71/1 (2016), the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration), which commits to combat discrimination against displaced persons, mainstream a gender perspective in displacement responses, and ensure access to healthcare and education.⁷⁵ The New York Declaration reaffirms the 2030 Agenda for combating the root causes of forced displacement and lays the groundwork for the *Global Compact on Refugees* (Global Compact) (2017).⁷⁶ General Assembly resolution 79/156 on the “Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees” (2024) draws attention to the consequences of climate change and the increasing gap between humanitarian needs and funding.⁷⁷

The Global Compact aims to transform the livelihoods of refugees and host countries to help achieve the 2030 Agenda.⁷⁸ The Global Compact is a comprehensive framework to improve international responses to refugee situations.⁷⁹ It supports voluntary repatriation, vows to devise resettlement strategies in consultation with states, and promises to assist countries via expertise and resources with the local integration of refugees.⁸⁰ States and stakeholders are invited to implement tangible actions that enhance refugees’ well-being; their pledges are publicly shared online to track their implementation and inspire best practices.⁸¹ Private sector pledges often offer legal assistance to refugees, while civil society pledges ensure refugees’ access to job opportunities and education.⁸² Every four years, the Global Refugee

⁶⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015. p. 16; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025.

⁷⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025.

⁷¹ Ibid; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015. p. 18.

⁷² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *About UNHCR*. N.d.

⁷³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Report 2024*. 2025.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (A/RES/71/1). 2016.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 4, annex 1.

⁷⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (A/RES/79/156). 2024. pp. 1-2.

⁷⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact on Refugees* (A/RES/73/12 (Part II)). 2018.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. pp. 16-20.

⁸¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Pledges & Contributions*. 2025.

⁸² Ibid.



Forum (GRF) brings together Member States, civil society, and displaced persons to support the implementation of the Global Compact.⁸³ The 2023 GRF resulted in 47 multi-stakeholder pledges, ranging from refugees' inclusion in basic social services or land allocation to climate adaptation plans and the provision of pro bono legal services.⁸⁴ General Assembly resolution 79/156 on the "Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees" (2024) highlights regional approaches to implementing the Global Compact, such as the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, the Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional approach as mechanisms enhancing responsibility sharing between states.⁸⁵

UNHCR collaborates with United Nations subsidiary bodies to further protect displaced persons' rights and help achieve the 2030 Agenda.⁸⁶ UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) form the IASC that produces collective strategies for humanitarian assistance, such as the *Policy on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons* (2024) or the *Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action* (2016).⁸⁷ Through its focus areas on racism, gender, and humanitarian-development collaboration, IASC works to achieve SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 5, and SDG 17.⁸⁸ Further, UNHCR collaborates with the World Health Organization (WHO) to improve healthcare access, such as in 2020 when they protected 70 million forcibly displaced persons from COVID-19.⁸⁹ The same year, UNHCR and the World Food Programme established the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub to provide technical expertise for reliable food assistance.⁹⁰ In 2022, UNHCR developed the Appraisal Tool on the Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons in National Frameworks for the Achievement of the SDGs with the United Nations Development Programme. This instrument assists national authorities in analyzing how displaced persons are included in the achievement of SDGs.⁹¹ To be able to respond to emergencies, UNHCR maintains several global stockpiles of essential goods, from which it can deliver tents, blankets, jerry cans, and kitchen sets.⁹²

⁸³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/12 (Part II))*. 2018. p. 4; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Refugee Forum*. N.d.

⁸⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2023*. 2023.

⁸⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/RES/79/156)*. 2024. p. 5.

⁸⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UN and international organizations*. N.d.

⁸⁷ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *The Inter-Agency Standing Committee*. N.d.; Inter-Agency Standing Committee. *Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. 2024; Inter-Agency Standing Committee. *Protection in Humanitarian Action*. 2016.

⁸⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *The IASC in focus*. N.d.

⁸⁹ World Health Organization. *WHO and UNHCR join forces to improve health services for refugees, displaced and stateless people*. 2020.

⁹⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, World Food Programme. *Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub*. 2025.

⁹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Development Programme. *Appraisal Tool on the Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons in National Frameworks for the Achievement of the SDGs*. 2022.

⁹² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Delivering supplies*. N.d.; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Doing business with UNHCR*. 2015. p. 14.



The well-being of displaced persons in relation to the 2030 Agenda is a focus area for NGOs and academic research.⁹³ Established in 1962, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) is a global network of 160 NGOs for humanitarian action, with forced migration as one of its focus areas.⁹⁴ One member is Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF), a medical humanitarian organization providing health services to displaced persons through its mobile clinics and limiting disease outbreaks in displacement camps by building sanitation infrastructures.⁹⁵ Thus, MSF contributes to the achievement of SDG target 3.d on “strengthening the capacity for risk reduction and management of health risks”.⁹⁶ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre has been drawing attention to displacement interlinked with the SDGs since 2017 and provides data and analyses on IDPs as a basis for policies.⁹⁷ Next, IRAP offers legal aid and thus ensures fair treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.⁹⁸ In 2021, IRAP launched the Climate Displacement Program to initiate conversation on potential international treaties specifically protecting climate-displaced people.⁹⁹ Lastly, the academic journal *Forced Migration Review* published an article in 2018 titled “The Sustainable Development Goals and IDPs,” commending the 2030 Agenda for paying particular attention to displaced persons, but also calling for the integration of IDPs in national development plans.¹⁰⁰

Strengthening the Rights of Women Experiencing Displacement

Furthering SDG 5, UNHCR is committed to protecting displaced women and girls, who face economic exclusion and GBV.¹⁰¹ UNHCR’s role as advocate for displaced persons requires discussions and consideration of gender issues to account for the additional difficulties faced by women and girls.¹⁰² These difficulties include fewer economic opportunities, as country-specific studies show that employment rates for displaced men are systematically 90-150% higher than those of displaced women.¹⁰³ Moreover, studies consistently uncover how forced displacement increases women’s risk of experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence, although the potential for more population-based quantitative research could be further explored.¹⁰⁴ For example, one study shows that one in four displaced women in Colombia and almost one in two displaced women in Liberia experience IPV within a year, while the respective rates for non-displaced women are one in five and one in three.¹⁰⁵

⁹³ International Council of Voluntary Agencies. *Forced Migration*. N.d.; *Forced Migration Review*. Home. N.d.

⁹⁴ International Council of Voluntary Agencies. *Forced Migration*. N.d.

⁹⁵ Doctors Without Borders. *Displacement and forced migration*. 2025.

⁹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 17.

⁹⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. *Two steps forward, one step back - Internal displacement and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development*. 2017.

⁹⁸ International Refugee Assistance Project. *Mission & Vision*. 2025.

⁹⁹ International Refugee Assistance Project. *21st Century Law for the 21st Century Migration: The Climate Displacement Program*. 2022.

¹⁰⁰ Zeender. *Forced Migration Review*. *The Sustainable Development Goals and IDPs*. 2018.

¹⁰¹ Klugman. World Bank Group. *The Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement: A Synthesis of New Research*. 2022; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Gender Based Violence*. N.d.

¹⁰² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Women*. N.d.

¹⁰³ Klugman et al. World Bank Group. *Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement Operational Note: Job Opportunities for Women in Displacement Settings*. 2024.

¹⁰⁴ Brück et al. *The Journal of Development Studies*. *Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement: A Brief Review and Introduction to the Special Issue*. 2024. p. 1844.

¹⁰⁵ Kelly et al. *The Journal of Development Studies*. *The Risk That Travels with You: Links Between Forced Displacement, Conflict and Intimate Partner Violence in Colombia and Liberia*. 2024. pp. 9-10.



Due to gender discrimination, forcibly displaced women have fewer economic opportunities.¹⁰⁶ This can result from a lack of access to land, education, or legal documentation necessary for safe and secure work.¹⁰⁷ The differences in opportunities start as early as primary education, where fewer than eight refugee girls go to school for every ten refugee boys.¹⁰⁸ Depending on the country, the pay gap between refugee women and host country women amounts to 20-94 cents for every dollar earned, while the pay gap between refugee women and refugee men is 7-38 cents for every dollar earned.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, displaced women's economic hardship is often exacerbated by the double burden of household care responsibilities and work.¹¹⁰ Resolving these economic difficulties for women experiencing displacement contributes to SDG target 8.5 on "decent work for all women and men and equal pay for work of equal value".¹¹¹ UNHCR's Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity champions women's leadership and political inclusion and their control over economic resources.¹¹² As demonstrated in its Gender Equality Toolkit from 2020, UNHCR works with schools to promote girls' inclusion in education, conducts leadership training, and ensures representation quotas in camp committee elections are met.¹¹³ Women's economic empowerment has been financially advanced by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).¹¹⁴ The WPHF collects funding from governments, the private sector, and individuals to support the work of women humanitarians and human rights defenders.¹¹⁵ Its funding initiative on forced displacement provides local displaced women organizations with money, aiming to improve their socio-economic standing and political inclusion in decision-making.¹¹⁶

GBV is a serious problem for the well-being of women and girls and is targeted through coordinated efforts by humanitarian actors.¹¹⁷ The risk of IPV can be up to 55% higher for women who are forcibly displaced in comparison to other women.¹¹⁸ A lack of institutions that would be able to comprehensively respond to and prevent violence can contribute to further GBV.¹¹⁹ To counteract this and coordinate humanitarian aid responses, the GBV Accountability Framework was established in 2018, channeling resources of UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

¹⁰⁶ Klugman. World Bank Group. *The Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement: A Synthesis of New Research*. 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁰⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. 2023. p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ RescueWorks. *Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential*. 2019.

¹¹⁰ Stojetz et al. The Journal of Development Studies. *The Double Burden of Female Protracted Displacement: Survey Evidence on Gendered Livelihoods in El Fasher, Darfur*. 2024.

¹¹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 19.

¹¹² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity*. 2018.

¹¹³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Gender Equality Toolkit*. 2020. pp. 58-75.

¹¹⁴ Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. *Support. Women. Respond to crisis. Build peace*. N.d.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. *Funding Initiative on Forced Displacement*. N.d.

¹¹⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Gender Based Violence*. N.d.

¹¹⁸ Arango et al. World Bank Group. *Forced Displacement and Violence Against Women: A Policy Brief*. 2021. p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. *The Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement: Findings from New Empirical Analysis*. 2021.



Affairs, and several national humanitarian aid agencies.¹²⁰ The GBV Accountability Framework promotes the development and implementation of GBV guidelines for humanitarian actors, the closing of funding gaps for GBV prevention, and the identification of GBV risks.¹²¹ As a result, the consultation of local women's organizations in crisis contexts rose from 56% in 2018 to 85% in 2023.¹²² Humanitarian response plans, including provisions to address gendered impacts of crises, rose from 45% to 82%.¹²³ Furthermore, UNHCR is concluding a *2023-2025 Strategy and Action Plan on Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment*, which employs a victim-centered approach to work on sexual misconduct.¹²⁴ It commits to training UNHCR personnel on preventing and mitigating the risks of sexual misconduct and responding to it, and works with local governments, NGOs, and civil society to target structural issues.¹²⁵ This way, UNHCR ensures its work is in accordance with achieving SDG target 5.2.¹²⁶

Furthering Access to Healthcare for All Displaced Persons

Having access to healthcare, a core objective of the 2030 Agenda, is a fundamental right to all people, including displaced persons.¹²⁷ In a 2022 health inclusion survey, UNHCR reported that 17% of countries surveyed show no or unequal access to hospital care.¹²⁸ Exacerbating the issue further, refugees are often systematically excluded from the coverage of social health insurance systems due to a lack of income or formal work opportunities.¹²⁹ Since 2021, UNHCR has followed a Global Public Health Strategy to build capacity for including refugees in national health systems, conduct public health needs assessments, and offer cash assistance to people in need.¹³⁰ The latest UNHCR *Annual Public Health Global Review* laments the reduction in humanitarian funding that hindered refugee self-reliance and inclusion and led to a decrease in health consultations for refugees by 7%.¹³¹ To further work towards achieving SDG target 3.d, UNHCR strives to improve health services at the community level, which reduces barriers to care and promotes equity.¹³² Furthermore, UNHCR partners with governments, local NGOs, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to provide health services and distribute medicine in displacement camps.¹³³ One such NGO, the Africa Humanitarian

¹²⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *GBV Accountability Framework*. 2019.

¹²¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *GBV Accountability Framework*. 2019.

¹²² Inter-Agency Standing Committee. *2023 IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report*. 2023. p. 8.

¹²³ Ibid. p. 10.

¹²⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment: 2023-2025 Strategy and Action Plan*. 2023.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 18.

¹²⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Public Health, Access to Healthcare*. N.d.

¹²⁸ Woodman. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *More countries are including refugees in national health systems, and development partnerships are key to the process*. 2022.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Annual Public Health Global Review 2024*. 2024. pp. 10-11.

¹³¹ Ibid. p. II.

¹³² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Operational Guidance: Community Health in Refugee Settings*. 2022.

¹³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*. N.d.



Action, provides community-based healthcare in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Sudan.¹³⁴

Maternal care and healthcare for children deserve special attention, specifically for displaced persons and refugees.¹³⁵ Between 2018 and 2024, an average of 337,800 children per year were born as refugees, and 57% of all refugee health consultations are for women.¹³⁶ In 2018, WHO published a technical guidance on *Improving the Health Care of Pregnant Refugee and Migrant Women and Newborn Children*, which recommends health information initiatives, professional interpreters, and cultural mediators in health service settings, or community clinics, in addition to hospitals as providers of maternal and neonatal care.¹³⁷ MAMTA, one highlighted project in the technical guidance, educated 12 thousand women on neonatal care, leading to a 100% stillbirth prevention rate.¹³⁸

Forced displacement severely impacts mental health, highlighting the need for more focus on humanitarian assistance.¹³⁹ Refugees often come from areas of conflict, such as armed violence, human rights abuses, or natural catastrophes due to climate change, leading to and exacerbating mental health issues.¹⁴⁰ In fact, refugees are twice as likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to the general population.¹⁴¹ In addition to PTSD, mental health issues include emotional disorders like anxiety and depression, as well as psychotic disorders.¹⁴² In 2024, health consultations relating to mental, neurological, and substance use conditions made up 2.9% of all consultations, marking a stark increase from 1.9% in 2023.¹⁴³ UNHCR works to include mental health in primary care and implements scalable psychological interventions by training 922 service providers in group therapy approaches across countries in 2024.¹⁴⁴ Preliminary results of these trainings point to reduced depression symptoms among refugee clients and improved emotional regulation among youth.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

The continued protection, enhancement, and implementation of rights for displaced persons is crucial in achieving all SDGs.¹⁴⁶ It is estimated that by the end of April 2025, 122.1 million people were forced to

¹³⁴ Africa Humanitarian Action. *Healthcare*. 2025.

¹³⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹³⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugee Data Finder*. N.d.; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Annual Public Health Global Review 2024*. 2024. p. II.

¹³⁷ World Health Organization. *Improving the Health Care of Pregnant Refugee and Migrant Women and Newborn Children*. 2018. pp. 23-24.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 20.

¹³⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Handbook to Guide the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees - Mental Health*. 2024.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Worldmetrics. *Refugee Mental Health Statistics*. 2025.

¹⁴² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in UNHCR - Annual Report 2024*. 2024. p. 4.

¹⁴³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Annual Public Health Global Review 2024*. 2024. p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in UNHCR - Annual Report 2024*. 2024. pp. 7-8.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025.



flee their homes.¹⁴⁷ With this, the collaboration amongst United Nations bodies, NGOs, governments, and the private sector is crucial in protecting and furthering the rights of displaced persons, while also achieving all SDGs, specifically SDG 1, SDG 3, and SDG 5.¹⁴⁸ UNHCR helps to protect displaced persons through prioritizing the decrease of GBV for all displaced persons, specifically women and children, through action plans, such as *Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment: Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025*.¹⁴⁹ Alongside this, UNHCR advocates for access to healthcare for all, specifically displaced persons and refugees, through following a Global Public Health Strategy.¹⁵⁰ With the focus of aiding and protecting displaced persons, 9.8 million displaced persons and 1.8 million refugees were able to return to their area of origin in 2024.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, with the rise of displaced persons, IDPs, and refugees, there must be an increase in resources and protection of basic human rights globally.¹⁵² International participation, cooperation, and advocacy, amongst all relevant actors, can protect and further the rights of displaced persons, which can promote change for all and further achieve the SDGs.¹⁵³

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How do the rights of displaced persons connect to the 2030 Agenda? What specific strategies should Member States and UNHCR create to help protect the rights of displaced persons? How can Member States, other United Nations entities, NGOs, and the private sector further advocate for the rights of displaced persons? What role can the private sector play to help protect the rights of displaced persons? How can Member States eliminate GBV for the refugees, displaced persons, and IDPs residing in their country? What can governments do to decrease gender inequality for displaced women and children? How can the international community create access to maternal care, mental health aid, and overall access to healthcare? What can the international community do to increase access to healthcare for all displaced persons?

¹⁴⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends*. 2025.

¹⁴⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Our Partners*. N.d.

¹⁴⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment: 2023-2025 Strategy and Action Plan*. 2023.

¹⁵⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Annual Public Health Global Review 2024*. 2024.

¹⁵¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2024*. 2025. p. 3.

¹⁵² Ibid. p.12.

¹⁵³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement*. 2025.



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<https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/interagency/humanitarian-programme-cycle-iasc>

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<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/number-people-uprooted-war-shocking-decade-high-levels-unhcr>

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<https://www.who.int/news/item/21-05-2020-who-and-unhcr-join-forces-to-improve-health-services-for-refugees-displaced-and-stateless-people>

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2. The Provision of Sustainable Housing and Settlement for Refugees

*"Housing is not simply about a roof over one's head. It is a fundamental human right and the foundation upon which peace itself rests. [...] [The United Nations'] work on housing sits at the very heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, and when we secure adequate housing for all, we nurture the conditions where every other goal can flourish."*¹⁵⁴

Introduction

Recent conflicts have caused the number of refugees to increase to an estimated 36.8 million people around the world, making the provision of safe, sustainable, and secure housing and settlement a pressing issue.¹⁵⁵ Article 1 of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951 Convention) defines refugees as persons who have fled or are unable to return to the state of their nationality or habitual residence due to a reasonable fear of being persecuted.¹⁵⁶ Their number has more than doubled over the past decade due to ongoing wars and severe human rights violations.¹⁵⁷ Providing refugees with sustainable housing and settlement in the receiving country promotes their safety and dignity, and advances their integration into the respective societies by facilitating access to education, employment, and healthcare.¹⁵⁸ According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), housing is typically defined as the fulfilment of the individual human need to be sheltered and able to access basic amenities.¹⁵⁹ Housing is sustainable when it is affordable, environmentally friendly, and has positive effects on community cohesion, culture, and the economy.¹⁶⁰ In a broader sense, the term "sustainable settlements" refers to urban or rural areas that enable the mutually beneficial cohabitation of refugees and local populations and promote resilience.¹⁶¹ However, growing populations and migration rapidly exacerbate the demand for affordable housing and infrastructure, which cannot always be met, especially in developing states.¹⁶² For most refugees, only food is more expensive than rent, and, as a consequence, the cost of meeting their basic needs can result in payment defaults for housing.¹⁶³ As 73% of all refugees are based in low- and middle-income states, the pressure on limited infrastructure can lead

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Deputy Secretary-General's remarks at the Joint ECOSOC and UN-Habitat High-Level Dialogue on Adequate Housing for all [as prepared for delivery] - Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General*. 2025.

¹⁵⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Integration Handbook - Access to secure and affordable housing*. 2024; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugee Data Finder*. 2025; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues - Refugees*. N.d.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951. Art. 1.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues - Refugees*. N.d.; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Data and Statistics - Global Trends*. 2025.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Housing for Migrants and Refugees in the UNECE Region - Challenges and practices*. 2021. pp. 1-4.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Social Housing in India: definitions, challenges, and opportunities*. 2018.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 3.

¹⁶¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Multi-Stakeholder Pledges - GCR Objective 1 - Multi-stakeholder Pledge: Sustainable Human Settlements for Refugees and their Hosting Communities*. 2025.

¹⁶² United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 5.

¹⁶³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Cash and Shelter: Access to sustainable housing through cash assistance - Key considerations and learning*. 2023. p. 3.



to the formation of slums, which pose risks to the health of their inhabitants and to the environment.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, the limited availability of adequate housing can lead to competition between refugees and their host communities, causing tension between both groups.¹⁶⁵ Amongst other means, the international community addresses these multifaceted challenges through capacity-building in the respective communities.¹⁶⁶

Due to the limited availability of sustainable housing, countries often rely on refugee camps in order to quickly meet the basic needs of a large number of refugees at once.¹⁶⁷ Although these are intended to provide temporary accommodation only, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) highlights that more than 6.6 million people live in such facilities, sometimes staying for years or even decades.¹⁶⁸ Resources are often scarce in these camps, with 97% of their inhabitants lacking adequate access to electricity.¹⁶⁹ Combined with limited access to the internet, this isolates refugees from host populations, hindering the formation of cohesive communities.¹⁷⁰

UNHCR regards securing appropriate accommodation for newly arriving refugees as a top priority and works with Member States to provide support in this area.¹⁷¹ Besides advocating for the rights of refugees, UNHCR works with Member States and local authorities to integrate refugees into existing host communities.¹⁷² Although UNHCR stresses that refugee camps can only serve as temporary solutions and that their creation should generally be avoided, the agency provides durable shelter and facilitates access to education and employment opportunities where more sustainable settlements are infeasible.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 5; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugee Data Finder*. 2025.

¹⁶⁵ Solf et al. Migration Policy Institute. *Global Affordable Housing Shortages Can Harm Migrant Reception and Integration*. 2024.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Capacity-Building*. N.d.; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. 1999. pp. 2-4, 7.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 5; United States Association for UNHCR. *Refugee Facts - Refugee Camps*. 2025.

¹⁶⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Kingdom. *Shelter*. 2025; United States Association for UNHCR. *Refugee Facts - Refugee Camps*. 2025.

¹⁶⁹ United States Association for UNHCR. *Inside the world's five largest refugee camps*. 2023; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Nordic and Baltic Countries. *The UN Global Goals and Forced Displacement - UNHCR's work on the Sustainable Development Goals*. 2025.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Respond to Emergencies: Settlement and shelter*. 2025.

¹⁷² Ibid; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency - About UNHCR*. 2025.

¹⁷³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Respond to Emergencies: Settlement and shelter*. 2025; United States Association for UNHCR. *Refugee Facts - Refugee Camps*. 2025.



International and Regional Framework

Refugees have the right to civil protection and adequate housing, taking into account the host country's resources and capabilities.¹⁷⁴ Adequate housing is a human right, as defined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and further ratified by the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966).¹⁷⁵ The 1951 Convention specifies that this right shall also apply to refugees and sets the standard that refugees shall be treated as favorably as possible.¹⁷⁶ The *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1967) expanded the 1951 Convention's scope by removing time limitations and including refugees not related to the World Wars.¹⁷⁷

As adopted by the General Assembly, the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration) (2016) established housing as an essential step in refugee settlement.¹⁷⁸ Adequate housing facilitates refugee management as it mitigates the risk of unauthorized or unsupervised resettlement, ensuring safety and increasing the probability of assistance being effectively delivered.¹⁷⁹ The New York Declaration also included the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF) (2016) and laid the groundwork for other non-binding frameworks and cooperative efforts that promote refugee rights globally, in particular the *Global Compact on Refugees* (Global Compact) (2018).¹⁸⁰ While CRRF promotes durable solutions by focusing on local integration or resettlement to other countries, the Global Compact aims to unite the private sector, governments, and the United Nations in common refugee objectives.¹⁸¹ Together, these frameworks promote sustainable solutions, including dignified settlements that provide access to basic services such as water and sanitation, as well as access to sustainable infrastructure, whilst alleviating pressure on host countries.¹⁸²

The Global Compact advocates for settlements to be protected and promotes the integration and self-reliance of refugees.¹⁸³ It notes that Member States should oversee the protection and safety of settlements with the support of UNHCR and other stakeholders.¹⁸⁴ It encourages such cooperation,

¹⁷⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Committee. *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1967; United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951. p. 24.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 24; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Committee. *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1967; United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. 2016. p. 17.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁸⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018; United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. 2016. p. 16.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 16.

¹⁸² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018. p. 4; United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. 2016.

¹⁸³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018. pp. 21, 25, 38.

¹⁸⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018. p. 21.



including through multi-stakeholder pledges, which are commitments by signatories to the pledges to advance refugee rights by implementing certain actions.¹⁸⁵ These pledges range from supporting climate-resilient infrastructure to local integration measures or increased financial commitments to support refugees in countries around the world by Member States, United Nations bodies, and non-governmental organizations, amongst others.¹⁸⁶ As of October 2025, a total of 3,500 pledges have been made, of which 650 are fulfilled and 1,500 are in progress.¹⁸⁷ Initiatives as part of the Global Compact pledges advance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (no poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) by promoting refugee self-reliance and integration into host communities, and ensuring dignity and access to resources for all refugees.¹⁸⁸

Regional bodies have also adopted treaties to expand regional cooperation and ensure adequate recognition of refugees in their regions.¹⁸⁹ Notably, the *1966 Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees* of the African-Asian Legal Consultative Organization, the *1974 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (1974 Convention) of the African Union (AU), the *1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* (Cartagena Declaration) of the Organization of American States, and the *1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* of the Council of Europe cover various regions.¹⁹⁰ These documents define refugee status differently to reflect regional-specific contexts.¹⁹¹ For example, the 1974 Convention of the AU extends refugee status to internally displaced persons, i.e., people fleeing within countries, for example, due to internal conflict, and the Cartagena Declaration grants refugee status if there is a threat of group-based violence rather than direct individual persecution.¹⁹² However, although these documents have led to progress in the protection of refugees, none of them directly address housing as a right for refugees.¹⁹³

Role of the International System

UNHCR acts as the leading United Nations entity for refugee response, including settlement.¹⁹⁴ Refugee response includes prevention, preparation, infrastructure, training, capacity-building, and emergency responses.¹⁹⁵ UNHCR provides guidance to Member States through protocols, handbooks, and courses

¹⁸⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *What are Pledges?*. 2025.

¹⁸⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Pledges and Contributions*. 2025.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018. pp. 3, 4, 20; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018.

¹⁸⁹ African-Asian Legal Consultative Organization. *Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees*. 1966; African Union. *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. 1974; European Union, Council of Europe. *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. 1995; Organization of American States. *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*. 1984.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ African Union. *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. 1974; Organization of American States. *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*. 1984.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid; African-Asian Legal Consultative Organization. *Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees*. 1966; European Union, Council of Europe. *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. 1995.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/RES/428 (V))*. 1950.

¹⁹⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Emergency Handbook*. 2025.



at the individual and governmental levels.¹⁹⁶ The *Emergency Handbook* (2025) contains guidance for emergency refugee responses, which include unforeseen events such as conflicts and natural disasters.¹⁹⁷ In terms of settlement, UNHCR's *Master Plan Approach to Settlement Planning* (Master Plan) (2019) outlines the steps for settlement planning.¹⁹⁸ UNHCR's *Strategic Framework for Climate Action 2024-2030* (Strategic Framework) (2023) is the agency's effort to address the increasing number of refugees due to climate-related events and maintain sustainability in its action plans, including through climate-resilient shelters.¹⁹⁹ The Master Plan works in conjunction with CRRF, providing guidance on refugee response to Member States, while the Strategic Framework and the *Shelter and Sustainability Manual* (2021) promote sustainable shelters in UNHCR's action plans.²⁰⁰ Regarding refugee responses, UNHCR supports Member States by providing logistical assistance and first-need resources such as clean water, food, and shelter.²⁰¹ Moreover, UNHCR also assists with communication and coordination with other United Nations entities, and provides financial support for projects where available.²⁰² UNHCR further promotes refugee response through advocacy.²⁰³ For example, the High Commissioner advocated for civilians in Syria in 2020, when the conflict escalated, requesting a ceasefire and encouraging neighboring countries to aid civilians by offering refuge.²⁰⁴

Refugee settlement is possible through multilateral cooperation between host states, the United Nations system, and the public and private sectors.²⁰⁵ Over the course of 2025, the General Assembly addressed current issues regarding socioeconomic conditions for refugees by highlighting the situation of Palestinian refugees as part of resolution 79/88 "Assistance to Palestine refugees."²⁰⁶ Moreover, it previously established the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to discuss and enhance coordination on refugee settlement, urban displacement planning, and integration support.²⁰⁷ UNHCR is an active member of IASC, along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).²⁰⁸ IOM actively works with Member States on resettlement,

¹⁹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees* (A/RES/73/151). 2018; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Emergency Handbook*. 2025; United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. 1951.

¹⁹⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Emergency Handbook*. 2025.

¹⁹⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The Master Plan Approach To Settlement Planning - Guiding Principles*. 2019.

¹⁹⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030*. 2023. p. 20.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 20; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The Master Plan Approach To Settlement Planning - Guiding Principles*. 2019. p. 8; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Shelter and Sustainability Manual*. 2021; United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (A/RES/71/1). 2016.

²⁰¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Emergency Handbook*. 2025.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UN High Commissioner for Refugees appeals for safety for civilians trapped in Idlib*. 2020.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees* (A/RES/73/151). 2018.

²⁰⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Assistance to Palestine Refugees* (A/RES/79/88). 2024.

²⁰⁷ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *The Inter-Agency Standing Committee*. N.d.; United Nations, General Assembly. *Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations* (A/RES/46/182). 1991.

²⁰⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *The Inter-Agency Standing Committee*. N.d.



relocation, and complementary pathways for refugees, such as local integration.²⁰⁹ At the same time, FAO works directly with forcibly displaced people by providing assistance, training in agricultural practices, ensuring food security for refugees, and promoting sustainability in areas that depend on agriculture.²¹⁰ Other United Nations entities that work directly with UNHCR are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN-Habitat.²¹¹ UNICEF and UNHCR have created the *Strategic Collaboration Framework* (2023), an agreement between the organizations to expand action towards safeguarding displaced children by ensuring access to food, shelter, nutrition, and education, as well as promoting family reunification.²¹² UNHCR has also partnered with UN-Habitat to create frameworks for stakeholders working in refugee response, for example, the *Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas* (2022), which provides an area- and needs-based approach to urban planning for refugees, targeting areas of greatest need.²¹³ Additionally, the multi-stakeholder pledge under the Global Compact seeks to involve the private sector and financial institutions in order to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid operations.²¹⁴ Likewise, UNHCR's 2023 *Strategy on Engaging with Development Actors* promotes partnerships with financial institutions, United Nations country teams, and non-governmental organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee, for equitable financial and technical support in refugee settlements.²¹⁵ A notable example of this is the 2023 Refugee and Host Communities Support Project, in which the World Bank, UNHCR, and the Government of Chad collaborated on humanitarian assistance.²¹⁶ Through this initiative, the World Bank financed the construction of five primary schools and supported the relocation of health and educational services to improve access for refugees.²¹⁷ This collaboration illustrates how the advancement of SDG 17 (partnership for the goals) can sustain settlement success, not only by promoting action but also by translating action into frameworks that aid Member States.²¹⁸

Facilitating Integration Through Sustainable Housing

The integration of refugees into their host communities is a goal that can be facilitated through sustainable housing.²¹⁹ The *New Urban Agenda* (2016), established through General Assembly resolution 71/256 titled identically, and the *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*

²⁰⁹ International Organization for Migration. *Resettlement, Relocation and Complementary Pathways*. 2025.

²¹⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO emergencies and resilience - Q&A: Forced Displacement*. 2025.

²¹¹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme et al. *Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas*. 2022; United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF-UNHCR Strategic Collaboration Framework*. 2025.

²¹² United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF-UNHCR Strategic Collaboration Framework*. 2025.

²¹³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme et al. *Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas*. 2022. p. 4.

²¹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *What are Pledges?*. 2025.

²¹⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR's Strategy on Engaging with Development Actors*. 2024. pp. 7, 8.

²¹⁶ World Bank Group. *The World Bank and the UNHCR join forces to support Sudanese refugees and host communities in Chad*. 2023.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR's Strategy on Engaging with Development Actors*. 2024; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

²¹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Integration of Refugees (A/RES/638 (VII))*. 1952; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*. 2009.



(2009) propose urban settlements as a long-lasting solution for refugee housing, and for fostering integration between refugees and residents.²²⁰ The *New Urban Agenda* is a global framework that guides urban development in accordance with the goals of sustainability, inclusion, and accessibility.²²¹ Based on these protocols, urban settlements utilize existing infrastructure to house those in need, initially at low-to-no cost for the refugees.²²² Utilizing unused infrastructure alleviates the pressure on the housing market, as long as the goal of integrating refugees ultimately allows them to be independent of cash assistance.²²³ Therefore, sustainable urban settlements are a pathway for the integration of refugees, as they solve settlement needs, promote equality through people-centered approaches, and follow policies for safety, protection, and human dignity.²²⁴ Additionally, UNHCR's report, *Global Trends 2020*, estimates that 56% of the world's population lives in urban areas, including refugees.²²⁵ High-density population in urban areas poses a risk of increasing competition for living space with residents, increasing community tension, and leaving refugees of a lower socio-economic status without the ability to afford housing without assistance.²²⁶ Community tensions, as well as a lack of affordability, increase the demand for integration programs for residents and refugees, which consequently need to be considered when planning urban settlements.²²⁷

People-centered approaches have been effective at facilitating sustainable housing and integration.²²⁸ These approaches place community needs at the center of humanitarian programs by recognizing the community as the experts of their own needs.²²⁹ An example of sustainable people-centred approaches is the Jordan Urban Shelter Project (2016), a project under which the World Bank, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and private entities covered the expenses of urban housing for a group of highly vulnerable refugees after evaluating the community's needs.²³⁰ As a result of their efforts, refugees were able to have safe housing for a year, allowing them to process traumatic experiences and focus on pursuing economic opportunities.²³¹ This facilitated the integration process, made refugees less dependent on humanitarian aid, and translated into growth for the local economy.²³²

²²⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*. 2009. pp. 21, 22; United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Tumen. Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. *The Impact of Forced Displacement on Housing and Urban Settlement in Host Communities*. 2022. pp. 7, 8.

²²⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*. 2009; United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016.

²²⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2020*. 2020. p. 27.

²²⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*. 2009. p. 2.

²²⁷ Ibid. pp. 12, 16.

²²⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016; World Habitat. *Urban Shelter Project - Finalist 2016 | Jordan*. 2016.

²²⁹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *International Guidelines on People-Centered Smart Cities (HSP/HA.2/Res.1)*. 2023.

²³⁰ World Habitat. *Urban Shelter Project - Finalist 2016 | Jordan*. 2016.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.



Capacity-Building for Sustainable Housing and Settlement

UNHCR supports refugees in multiple settlement modalities while striving for sustainability.²³³ Existing settlement modalities include camps, collective and long-term shelter, and rental programs through cash assistance.²³⁴ Collective shelter is infrastructure that was already in place but has been temporarily repurposed to host refugees, for example, schools, hospitals, and churches.²³⁵ Long-term shelter, or durable shelter, is housing that is meant for refugees to rebuild their lives in the region and includes all essential services, such as clean water, sanitation, and access to electricity.²³⁶ Lastly, shelter through rental programs entails cash assistance to allow refugees to participate in the normal housing market.²³⁷ In cases of unforeseen emergencies, camps are frequently set up, although they usually consist of tents that may not include any essential services and are consequently not durable.²³⁸ Member States, with the support of UNHCR, identify what kind of settlement is needed based on available infrastructure, the number of refugees, and the resources available.²³⁹

Lack of funding, conflict, and climate factors often impede sustainable housing.²⁴⁰ UNHCR's report, *Global Trends 2024*, notes that most refugees live in conflict-affected areas, with almost two-thirds residing in low and middle-income countries, and 67% having spent more than five years in their host Member States, increasing the need for sustainable housing.²⁴¹ While UNHCR strives to achieve the SDGs and safeguard refugees, external factors, such as conflict, climate change, and lack of funding impede these efforts.²⁴² For example, conflict often damages infrastructure and terrain, renders roads inaccessible and water resources unusable, and leaves refugees unprotected.²⁴³ Settlements with insufficient funding are also at risk of leaving refugees unprotected due to a lack of access to water and housing.²⁴⁴ Moreover, climate change-related events, such as droughts, exacerbate the lack of resources.²⁴⁵ An example of a settlement

²³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Respond to Emergencies: Settlement and shelter*. 2025.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The Master Plan Approach To Settlement Planning - Guiding Principles*. 2019. p. 8; United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. 2016. pp. 17, 18.

²⁴⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2023*. 2023. pp. 8-10; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2024*. 2024. pp. 10, 12.

²⁴¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2024*. 2024. pp. 8, 40.

²⁴² Ibid. p. 8, 40.

²⁴³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, USA. *UNHCR calls for de-escalation as Israel-Iran strikes create humanitarian fears*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Senior Envoy Warns Iran-Israel Conflict is Deepening Crisis in Afghanistan*. 2025.

²⁴⁴ European Union, European Commission. *A welcoming haven for those fleeing strife and insecurity: Uganda's unique refugee policy*. 2024; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, USA. *Uganda's open-door policy for refugees strained by arrivals from Sudan, DRC, and South Sudan*. 2024.

²⁴⁵ European Union, European Commission. *A welcoming haven for those fleeing strife and insecurity: Uganda's unique refugee policy*. 2024.



facing these issues is the Nakivale settlement in Uganda.²⁴⁶ While Uganda is generally recognized for its progressive strategies for refugees and its integration policies, climate change is quickly deteriorating the settlement.²⁴⁷ The effects of climate change can be mitigated through capacity-building, which is the ability to adapt to new challenges, strengthen response capacity, and develop new sustainable practices in areas of need.²⁴⁸ Capacity-building aligns with United Nations frameworks such as the *New Urban Agenda* and UNHCR's Global Compact.²⁴⁹ As a strategy, it promotes strategic alliances, such as those between UNHCR and governmental institutions, and advances durable solutions, including sustainable shelter.²⁵⁰

Capacity-building is necessary to achieve sustainable and durable settlements.²⁵¹ UNHCR highlights the advantages of capacity-building in *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes* (1999).²⁵² As demonstrated by the examples of Uganda and areas in conflict, the capacity to plan for and adapt to emerging challenges is essential, as these challenges directly affect Member States' ability to ensure the safety of refugees.²⁵³ Capacity-building for settlements is a strategic approach that involves prevention strategies regarding imminent challenges, namely climate change, through the training of residents and workers, and the supervision of the project within and around the settlement area.²⁵⁴ In the Tildé Camp in Cameroon, a partnership between the government, UNHCR, and the Central Emergency Response Fund enabled the planning of climate-resilient shelters as floods became more frequent in the area.²⁵⁵ These efforts facilitated the long-term recovery of the camp and protected the dignity of the refugee families.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁶ Ibid; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, USA. *Uganda's open-door policy for refugees strained by arrivals from Sudan, DRC, and South Sudan*. 2024.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Capacity-Building*. N.d.

²⁴⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. 1999; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018; United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016.

²⁵⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. 1999.

²⁵¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter*. 2014. p. 30.

²⁵² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. 1999.

²⁵³ European Union, European Commission. *A welcoming haven for those fleeing strife and insecurity: Uganda's unique refugee policy*. 2024; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter*. 2014. p 30; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, USA. *Uganda's open-door policy for refugees strained by arrivals from Sudan, DRC, and South Sudan*. 2024.

²⁵⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Capacity-Building*. N.d.

²⁵⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. 1999; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Africa. *Surviving the Sahel: Stories of Resilience in Cameroon's Far North*. 2025.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.



Conclusion

Providing sustainable housing and settlements for refugees poses significant challenges for host states, but ultimately promotes integration as well as social cohesion, which generates mutual benefits.²⁵⁷ Recent conflicts have led to a significant increase in the number of refugees around the world, and climate change, urbanization, and scarcity of resources exacerbate the situation.²⁵⁸ Through strategic partnerships at the international and local levels, UNHCR can assist Member States in using existing resources and formalizing temporary accommodations by providing long-lasting shelter and educational and livelihood programs to advance the self-reliance of the people living there.²⁵⁹ By integrating refugees into the local housing markets, Member States can safeguard their rights and dignity whilst benefiting from the economic advantages of well-integrated and cohesive communities.²⁶⁰ Strategic capacity-building within these communities can ensure that they remain resilient to external factors such as conflict and climate change.²⁶¹

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can UNHCR build on its efforts to ensure that refugees have access to sustainable housing and settlements? In what ways can the international community and UNHCR help to transform existing refugee camps into sustainable settlements? How can UNHCR contribute to the universal implementation of frameworks safeguarding the rights of refugees? Which other partnerships and international programs can be harnessed to further promote social cohesion between refugees and their host communities?

²⁵⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2023*. 2023. pp. 8-10; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 3; World Habitat. *Urban Shelter Project - Finalist 2016 | Jordan*. 2016.

²⁵⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2023*. 2023. pp. 8-10; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Data and Statistics - Global Trends*. 2025; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues - Refugees*. N.d.; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 5.

²⁵⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR's Strategy on Engaging With Development Actors*. 2024. p. 3; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Respond to Emergencies: Settlement and shelter*. 2025; United States Association for UNHCR. *Refugee Facts - Refugee Camps*. 2025.

²⁶⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Respond to Emergencies: Settlement and shelter*. 2025; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities: A Policy Framework for Developing Countries*. 2012. p. 3; World Habitat. *Urban Shelter Project - Finalist 2016 | Jordan*. 2016.

²⁶¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. 1999. pp. 3, 7; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Africa. *Surviving the Sahel: Stories of Resilience in Cameroon's Far North*. 2025; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *What we do: Climate change and displacement*. 2025.



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