

Through its Key Initiatives series, DPSM shares regular updates on interesting projects that produce key tools, practical guidance and new approaches aimed to move UNHCR operations forward.



Tanzania / Young Somali Bantu girl in Chogo village. / UNHCR / Brendan Bannon / 2009

UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

UNHCR developed the *Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps* to assist colleagues in determining the key priority actions needed at the country level to take forward implementation of UNHCR's *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*. As of March 2015, 92 operations had completed the tool exercise to inform their operational planning for 2016-2017. The consolidated results of the self-assessment exercise also provide a global view of the state of play, the possible opportunities and the constraints UNHCR is facing in translating the *Policy* into reality at the operational level.

The High Commissioner has made the pursuit of alternatives to camps a key priority for UNHCR and believes this policy direction will benefit both refugees and host countries. The effective implementation of the *UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps* requires important institutional changes within UNHCR, as well as adaptation of operational approaches, systems and tools, new skills and partnership models. UNHCR may nevertheless draw upon five years of experience in implementing the *Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Area* in a context with approximately sixty percent of all refugees living outside of camps in urban or rural settings.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the *Diagnostic Tool* is to assist UNHCR Representatives and their teams in analyzing the prospects, opportunities and challenges to implementation of the *Policy*. The tool outlines two specific objectives:

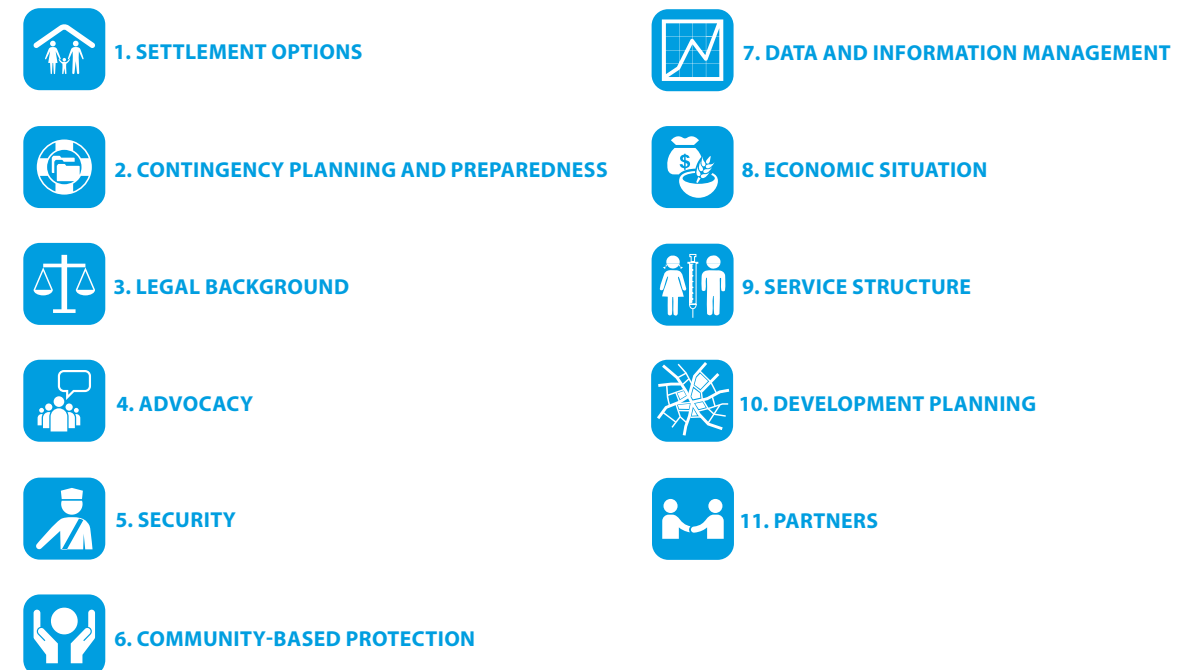
- To obtain a “snap shot” overview of the current situation in each operation regarding the key elements required to pursue alternatives to camps.
- To identify key actions and/or strategies that can be developed and applied for pursuing alternatives to camps within the planning exercise of each operation.

CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

The tool consists of an online questionnaire that, once completed, generates a traffic light report providing operations with an overview of the current state of implementation of the *Policy*.

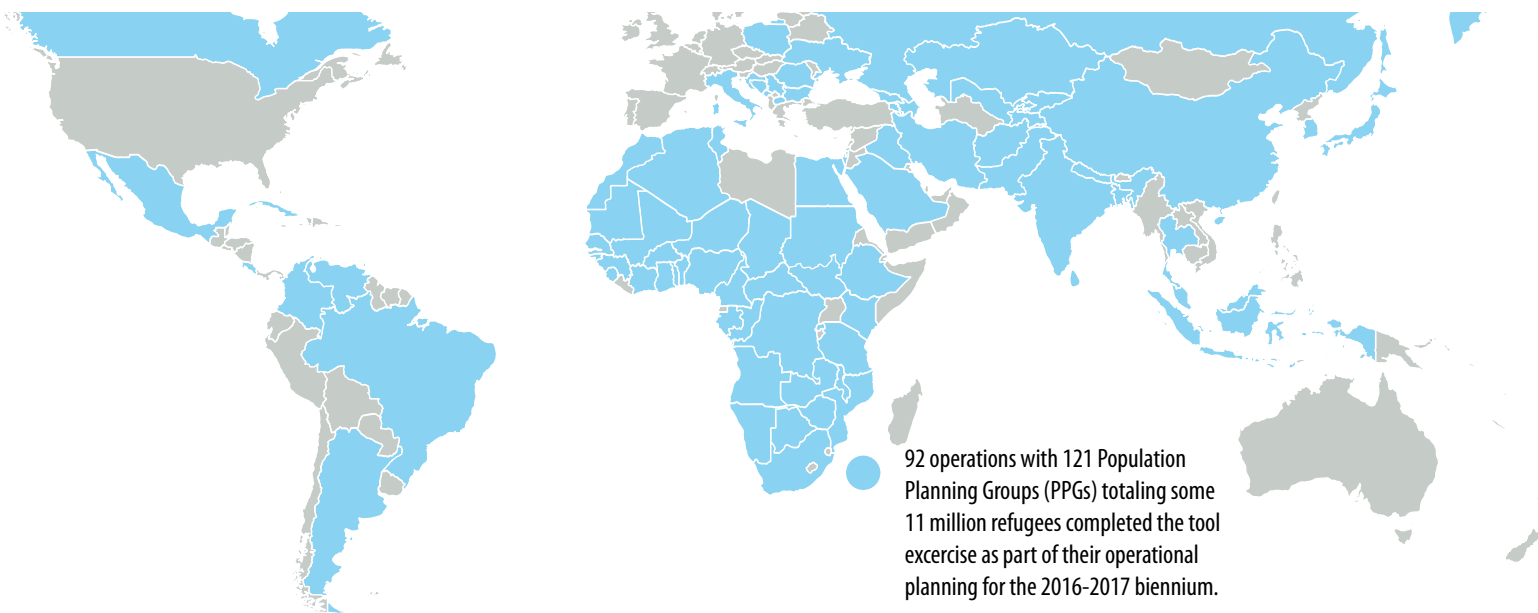
As reflected in the graphic below, the overall structure and content of the tool is based on the framework for analysis for pursuing alternatives to camps and the lines of action outlined in the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*. The tool is further informed by other existing global policies, strategies, tools, guidance and systems, including UNHCR's Results Framework.

UNHCR DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR ALTERNATIVES TO CAMPS: LINES OF ACTION



UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps

2015 Global Results



FIRST RESULTS

Most UNHCR field operations completed the tool exercise as part of their operational planning for the 2016-2017 biennium. The results have informed planning at the field level, but have also supplied useful analysis for the UNHCR's Annual Programme Review, which aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of the country operation plans.

The global results of the tool highlight many good practices by UNHCR operations pursuing alternatives to camps, including in such areas as community outreach and the mainstreaming of refugees in the national health care and education systems. Field responses also underline the need for reinforced action on contingency planning and preparedness, advocacy and engagement in relation to national development planning and partnerships with development actors, in addition to more focused efforts in the areas of self-reliance.

To access the full global results of the *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*, please visit: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/54d9c7686.html>

BACKGROUND

In July 2014, UNHCR organised a workshop with senior managers from country operations to better understand the practical support required to implement the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*. Based on these discussions, technical experts at Headquarters in areas such as protection, public health, solutions, and shelter, in close collaboration with the senior colleagues in country operations developed the *Diagnostic Tool*. Following the field test in November 2014, UNHCR formally launched the tool in January 2015 as a part of the *Programme Instructions on Reporting on 2014 - Implementation in 2015 - Planning for 2016 and 2017*.

FROM THE FIELD

Global uptake of the tool was excellent. Efforts to take forward implementation of UNHCR's *Policy on Alternative to Camps* are evident in the 2016-2017 country operations plans considered through the Annual Programme Review. As an example, the UNHCR operation in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) included the results of the *Diagnostic Tool* in their Country Operations Plan (COP) meeting, which brought about ideas on innovative operational approaches. The DRC operation completed the tool for six different population groups covered by its plan and was therefore able to compare the results and good practices across the population groups, as well as discuss common challenges.



WHAT COMES NEXT?

- The *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps* will inform operational planning on an annual basis.
- The tool will help monitoring progress on the implementation of the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* against set baselines.
- UNHCR experts at Headquarters will provide direct technical support in some of the needed areas as identified through the *Diagnostic Tool*.
- UNHCR will further develop the toolbox to address some of the challenges identified through the exercise to support the implementation of the specific lines of action of the *Policy*.
- The annual results of the *Diagnostic Tool* will inform UNHCR's Annual Programme Review.
- UNHCR will refine the tool for the next operational planning period based on valuable feedback from field colleagues.

MORE INFORMATION

For more detailed information on the results of the *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*, please contact the Alternatives to Camps team in DPSM: hqatc@unhcr.org.