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UNHCR Sudan

Independent Evaluation of the UNHCR South Sudanese Refugee Response in White Nile State, Sudan (2013 – 2018)

August 2018

Final Evaluation Report

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Commissioned by UNHCR Sudan

Conducted by:

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Evaluation Report July 2018

Evaluation commissioned by UNHCR Sudan

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This is an independent evaluation and team members assume responsibility for all opinions, recommendations and any unintended errors that may appear in this report.

Photo: Jock Baker

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AGD	Age, Gender and. Diversity Mainstreaming
CBI	Cash Based Initiative
COR	Commission for Refugees
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
EQ	Evaluation Question
EUR	Euro
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GBP	British Pounds
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoS	Government of Sudan
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Office for Migration
JAM	Joint Assessment Mission
l/p/d	litres/person/day
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSB	Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
NFI	Non-food items

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPT	Out Patient Treatment
PAVE	Partnering Against Violent Extremism
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PoC	Persons of Concern
RCF	Refugee Consultation Forum
RWG	Refugee Working Group
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
RMS	Refugee Multi-Sector
RRRP	Regional Response Plan
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SENS	Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRCS	Sudanese Red Crescent Society
STAT	Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TOR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WHO	United Nations World Health Organisation
WNS	White Nile State

Executive Summary

Evaluation Subject, Purpose and Scope

UNHCR Sudan commissioned this evaluation for the purpose of accountability and learning, with an emphasis on generating lessons learnt and identifying examples of good practice to support improvements to the ongoing refugee response in White Nile State (WNS) which may also be applied to the wider refugee response in other parts of Sudan. The evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which protection, including assistance needs of refugees, have been met and to gauge the degree to which timely operational adjustments or revisions in strategic direction or coordination mechanisms have been made since the beginning of the crisis to meet the emerging needs of the refugee population. UNHCR anticipated that the conclusions and recommendations resulting from this independent evaluation will contribute to developing its strategic engagement in the ongoing response in Sudan, highlighting key lessons that can influence future ongoing activities and planning. This evaluation covered the UNHCR and partner response between December 2013 and April 2018.

Methodology

The evaluation was divided into three-phases: inception, data collection and analysis. The data collection phase included both a desk review and a three week visit to Sudan to collect data relevant to the five evaluation questions (EQ) listed in the terms of reference (TOR) for this evaluation. The team interviewed a total of 202 stakeholders, either face-to-face, or by phone, including government officials, bilateral donors, United Nations (UN) Agencies, national and local authorities, international and national Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This number includes 15 Focus Group discussions (FGD) with representatives of refugee and host communities. The team conducted a desk review of policy and strategy documents, evaluations, reviews, studies and other documents. An interagency workshop was held prior to circulation of the draft report where staff from UNHCR and partners were given the opportunity to provide high level feedback on preliminary findings and provide perspectives on the relevance and achievability of emerging recommendations. The evaluation team found it challenging with some of UNHCR's interventions to assess achievements due to variable quality of monitoring data and relied to a large extent on qualitative data collected during interviews and FGDs.

Summary of Findings

A summary of findings based on each of the five evaluation questions is given below.

1. Relevance of UNHCR and Partner Strategies

UNHCR RRRPs were appropriately focused on three priorities: 1) maintenance of emergency response capacities, 2) achievement of minimum emergency sectoral standards and 3) facilitation of durable solutions. At the same time the UNHCR RRRP did not provide sufficient strategic guidance for UNHCR operations in WNS for two main reasons. Firstly, it was only an annual strategy covering a single calendar year. Secondly, it was a regional

strategy covering several countries and lacked sufficient context-specific detail to guide investments and operations.

Channelling of assistance and assessment – up until 2016 the Government of Sudan (GoS) required UNHCR to channel their assistance through the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS). UNHCR did this while simultaneously positioning themselves to work with a wider range of partners. UNHCR used the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) to guide collaboration with UN strategic partners, notably UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), who faced fewer GoS restrictions to operate in WNS. Until mid-2016 UNHCR was thus largely dependent on assessment data from secondary sources, primarily from SRCS. UNHCR’s remote management and monitoring systems were insufficient to allay doubts amongst many donors about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assistance provided. The operating environment in WNS significantly improved for UNHCR after mid-2017 when they were able to gain regular access to refugees in WNS.

Protection Strategy - UNHCR’s emphasis on registration and legitimization was an appropriate priority that helped to enable refugees to support themselves. UNHCR’s Protection Strategy gave priority to providing targeted support to persons with disabilities and other specific needs, though it lacked guidance on mainstreaming protection in different sectors. At the same time, the scale of unmet needs in shelter and sanitation raised the question of whether UNHCR should not have given more priority to investments in these sectors.

Persons of Concern (PoC) with specific needs - UNHCR’s focus on assessing relief needs without considering gaps in participation/inclusion and communication/transparency was inconsistent with policy guidance in UNHCR’s global Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy. A key element missing in virtually all of UNHCR’s sectoral strategies was about promoting community participation and ownership.

2. Achievement of Results

UNHCR was challenged by the lack of financial and human resources from the beginning of the crisis, which influenced the efficiency and effectiveness of their response. The initial decision by GoS to designate South Sudanese as “brothers and sisters” rather than as refugees left UNHCR with an ambiguous role in the response. After refugee status was accorded to the South Sudanese by GoS in 2016, UNHCR was able to take on a more central role in the refugee response in accordance with its mandate and provide more systematic technical support and directly monitor quality.

Assistance – Apart from an initial lack of physical access, UNHCR faced multiple challenges, including availability of land, low funding levels, poor road infrastructure, low national capacities and GoS policies that restricted intervention options. Mortality rates have remained below emergency thresholds, indicating that UNHCR’s contributions together with other humanitarian agencies, have helped to ensure the South Sudanese refugee population received life-saving support they required, even though emergency thresholds were exceeded in many sectors. There were considerable variations in standards of assistance between camps and there continued to be significant unmet needs in the sanitation, nutrition and shelter and education sectors. Some of the gaps observed were partly attributed to GoS

requirements that UNHCR invest in relatively costly permanent community infrastructure, which decreased coverage due to limited funding.

UNHCR's approach has helped to reduced fuelwood consumption by some 50 percent in the camps, although wood cutting remained a priority environmental concern for host communities. NFI and shelter assistance used a targeting approach since 2017. Other assistance, including WFP-supplied food aid, was provided via blanket distributions. Beneficiaries were found to be selling relief assistance to raise money to purchase food and non-food items, pay for medical expenses and meet other basic needs.

Protection - Protection has been a central focus of UNHCR's RRRP. Additional protection staff based in Kosti since 2017 has enabled UNHCR to increasingly fulfill its protection mandate, though many challenges remain, notably a reluctance of local authorities to allow UNHCR staff to conduct confidential interviews with refugees and strong sensitivities around attempts to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Delays in refugee registration and verification processes and credibility gaps in data have contributed to inefficiencies and has led to the perception that considerable numbers of refugees registered spent most of their time outside camps. Since the change of UNHCR's government counterpart from Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to the Commission for Refugees (COR), their involvement has helped to improve the knowledge and understanding amongst stakeholders of UNHCR's protection mandate and the role of the host government.

Building of National Capacities: Although UNHCR's response has been predominantly led by national staff and agencies, UNHCR has not had a capacity building strategy and capacity needs assessments did not appear to be used during periodic partner reviews.

Monitoring and Information Management: Donor representatives confirmed there had been a significant improvement in the quality of information provided by UNHCR. Information management systems tended to prioritise donor reporting, with lower priority given to continuous improvement and learning for field operations. With the exception of shelter and non-food items (NFI), which has been systematically collecting post-distribution monitoring (PDM) data since 2017, reporting by UNHCR and partners has been mainly at the activity/output level. There was no evidence of UNHCR-led or partner lessons-learned reviews that could inform annual planning exercises. UNHCR staff in Sudan had no previous experience of remote management systems, which became less important for camps once access had improved, but the lack of remote management systems continued to affect assistance and protection for PoCs staying in difficult-to-access areas.

Staffing and Funding: Numbers of UNHCR staff in Sudan were significantly lower in comparison with other countries in the region dealing with significant South Sudanese refugee influxes. By the end of 2017 UNHCR had considerably expanded their technical capacities, resulting in a decreased dependence on deployments from UNHCR's Emergency Response Team (ERT) and standby partners. UNHCR has only been able to mobilise between 19% and 37% of their annual funding requirements in the RRRPs. UNHCR Sudan has been able to cover its own operations budget but has lacked resources to adequately cover unmet life-saving and longer-term needs.

Value for Money (VFM): Relatively high operating and staff costs put pressure on UNHCR to demonstrate VFM for South Sudanese refugees. While UNHCR's specific technical expertise and overall contributions have helped in keeping mortality rates below emergency thresholds, areas where UNHCR could have improved VFM included, more systematic

monitoring of major cost drivers, minimising delays in updating/verifying registration data, promoting community ownership of infrastructure, more systematic use of PDM data and feedback from community complaints systems, increased use of CBI options, more strategic partner selection and improved preparedness based on lessons learned.

3. UNHCR's Refugee Response Coordination Responsibilities

Humanitarian Coordination Team (HCT) - UNHCR was praised for its teamwork by its peer HCT members for its coordination role in Sudan for CERF funding processes during 2014. The subsequent deterioration in team work with HCT peers observed was mainly attributed to a combination of UN strategic partners not delivering according to expectations along with UNHCR's increased technical capacities. These capacities made them less dependent on capacities of strategic partners but one result has been less of a development perspective in UNHCR's programming.

Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF)/Refugee Multi-Sector (RMS) - UNHCR's coordination systems were perceived as relatively inefficient until the RMS, later renamed as RCF, was launched in 2016 and the improvements in coordination helped to improve UNHCR's image both at a national level and in WNS. The RCF in Sudan was subsequently promoted by UNHCR's Regional Bureau as a model of good practice. Development actors such as UNDP and UNHABIT have been invited to the RCF but have yet to participate even though they are funding refugee-related interventions in refugee hosting areas. Participation by donors has also been irregular.

Harmonising approaches –UNHCR has faced major challenges in aligning its standards to meet basic protection and assistance needs using participatory approaches while at the same time satisfying GoS requirements to invest in relatively costly contractor-driven permanent community infrastructure with minimal participation from either refugees or host communities.

4. Consideration of Medium- and Long-term Objectives

UNHCR standards have been mainly designed for protracted refugee crises and were used to inform site planning for camps and related infrastructure in WNS. UNHCR's programme supported medium- to long-term objectives in a number of ways, including formalising agreements with state-level line ministries, advocacy with donors to support livelihood interventions, piloting durable solutions to refugee settlement, registration/legitimation of the refugee population, investments in permanent community infrastructure.

Areas for improvement included the lack of a multi-year strategy specifically for UNHCR's programme, an accompanying strategy for building national capacities, more sustainable exit strategies that promote ownership of refugee and host communities and site planning that is area-based, rather than camp-focused. Interviews with different UN agencies and donors indicated general agreement with the out-of-camp solution. Donors nevertheless expressed reservations about UNHCR's lack of a long-term strategic view.

5. Protection and Assistance for Persons of Concern

UNHCR has made progress in identifying vulnerable groups and individuals amongst the PoCs. Leaders in both refugee camps and host communities were used to regularly interacting with staff from UNHCR and partners, as were refugee women and youth groups. Despite these regular discussions, findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) indicated basic levels of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). Refugee and host community members displayed little knowledge of plans, technical specification or budgets of interventions. Refugees demonstrated little responsibility for monitoring implementation of interventions or maintaining community infrastructure and were constrained in giving honest feedback to agencies.

A qualitative assessment by the team based on UNHCR's ten AGD obligatory core actions found that good progress had been made in meeting commitments relating to AGD-inclusive programming data and the registration and legitimisation of vulnerable groups in camps. The main areas for improvement related to participation and inclusion. As access by UNHCR and their partners to PoC in WNS has improved since 2016, UNHCR has been able to improve their understanding of refugee profiles in camps, including PoC with specific needs. Since 2017, UNHCR has used SOPs that included eligibility criteria for persons with specific needs to prioritise distribution of NFIs and temporary shelter materials though UNHCR had only begun to look at specific needs in out of camp populations. There have nevertheless been significant problems with coverage and the quality of assistance provided by UNHCR's NGO partner tasked since 2014 to provide community services.

Conclusions

This section on conclusions begins with an overall statement on UNHCR Sudan's interventions in WNS from the end of 2013 until April 2018. This statement is followed by concise versions of conclusions linked to corresponding recommendations.

Overall Statement on UNHCR's interventions in White Nile State

UNHCR in Sudan was challenged from the start of the South Sudanese refugee crisis both by a lack of access to PoCs and by the low levels of financial and human resources. These factors had a significant influence on the efficiency and effectiveness of the response. Sudan was one of four major countries of asylum for South Sudanese refugees and UNHCR Sudan arguably faced the greatest challenges compared to other UNHCR offices in the region in scaling up, starting from the lack of a clear role due to a GoS decision to designate South Sudanese in Sudan as "brothers and sisters". This changed after refugee status was given in 2016 and, by the beginning of 2018, UNHCR was playing a lead role in providing protection and coordinating the response as they scaled up their capacity in WNS. Although UNHCR have continued to face important constraints, significant improvements in the operating environment from the end of 2017 should pave the way for UNHCR to address critical gaps and apply their coordination role to facilitate a move towards durable solutions for South Sudanese refugees in Sudan.

UNHCR Operations

- 1. There is a need to move to targeted assistance while making appropriate use of cash-based initiatives to improve cost effectiveness and coverage of vulnerable groups.**

The protracted nature of the crisis, now in its 4th year, combined with a restricted funding environment and evidence of disparate levels of need amongst PoCs indicate a need to move towards more systematic targeting where cash-based options could play a useful role, a conclusion which is consistent with results of the 2016 Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) and a 2017 independent evaluation covering WFP Sudan's operations in WNS. A move towards targeting would have been difficult with the basic level of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), notably in terms of participation and communication with refugees and host communities.

- 2. UNHCR and their partners have not fulfilled many AGD core actions, notably meaningful participation and inclusion of beneficiary communities.**

Interviews, document review, observations along with the results of a rapid AAP assessment conducted by the evaluation team found low levels for all three categories; communication, participation and complaints/feedback systems with both refugees and host communities. Interventions in the camps have been largely contractor-driven with little consultation or participation by the community. The result has been a lack of ownership of community structures, including frequent theft of community goods, decreased cost effectiveness of interventions and a growing dependency on external assistance and support.

- 3. UNHCR Sudan's core focus on refugee coordination and protection is appropriate, but protection has yet to be fully mainstreamed across all sectors and integrated in UNHCR's coordination role.**

While facing challenges in accessing PoCs and capacity gaps, UNHCR has kept protection at the centre of its Sudan operation. As sectoral coverage and scale of UNHCR's operations has increased, protection has not been mainstreamed consistently. The most recent versions of the Protection and sector specific strategies have not specifically addressed mainstreaming, which increased the risk of a siloed approach.

- 4. An alternative approach is needed for investments in permanent infrastructure in order to provide equitable protection and assistance.**

There has been a lack of alignment between meeting UNHCR's standards that aim to meet basic protection and assistance needs for those in need and requirements by GoS to invest in relatively costly permanent infrastructure. In this protracted crisis context, where a likely scenario will be local integration of a proportion of the refugee population, investments in permanent infrastructure are not likely to be wasted. However, this approach has resulted in widespread unmet needs and an alternative approach is needed.

5. There were more partnership options available to UNHCR to fill critical gaps than during the initial phases of the response.

Selection of partners was limited during the initial phase of operations due to the GoS requirement that UNHCR channel all their assistance through SCRS, which limited implementation options. The range of potential partners has increased since 2017 which provides UNHCR with an opportunity to take a more strategic approach to partner selection and capacity building, although GoS continues to require INGO partners to work solely with local NGOs who are already present in WNS.

6. UNHCR Sudan has had difficulties in systematically capturing results in a way that promotes learning and accountability to affected populations.

The evaluation team faced a key constraint while assessing results with the variable quality of monitoring data provided by UNHCR and their partners. With the exception of shelter and non-food items (NFI), which has collected PDM data on a routine basis since 2017, reporting was mainly at the activity/output level and UNHCR did not routinely track major cost drivers, which could have helped to improve VFM. UNHCR Sudan had a programme review system in place but the evaluation team did not find evidence of UNHCR-led or partner lessons-learned reviews that could, for example, inform annual planning exercises. UNHCR Sudan has made significant improvements to their information management systems since 2017 but the design has mainly targeted at donors with lower priority given to supporting monitoring and learning at a field level or enhance AAP.

UNHCR Strategy

7. The efficiency and effectiveness of UNHCR's programme has been reduced by gaps in preparedness and the lack of a clear multi-year strategy for this protracted crisis.

UNHCR understood from an early stage that this was likely to be a prolonged crisis and many of their initiatives and approaches have been consistent with medium- to longer-term planning. There was nevertheless a gap between UNHCR's sector-specific strategies, which cover multiple-years, and UNHCR's broad strategic objectives in the OCHA-led multi-year strategy. Even while major donors continue to express their concern about the lack of a clear vision of UNHCR's programme in WNS, some donors have nevertheless adhered to their Grand Bargain commitments by earmarking multi-year commitments even though UNHCR's global budgeting system only allows annual contributions. UNHCR and partners were not fully prepared for the large influx during 2017, which has also contributed to inefficiencies.

8. Differing expectations and mixed results from strategic partnerships with peer UN agencies during earlier stages has eroded the teamwork that was evident during the initial phases of the response.

UNHCR Sudan viewed the launch of the Refugee Coordination Model in early 2014 as an opportunity to undertake joint action with selected UN strategic partners to help face

challenges with access to PoCs and lack of technical capacities. The team approach that was evident during 2014-2015 subsequently broke down when agencies were not delivering according to each other's expectations within a system where each agency was mainly accountable to their respective donors, not to each other. Similarly, there was little evidence of an interagency mechanism for following implementing recommendations emerging from joint assessments such as the JAM. As UNHCR increased their capacity, they became less dependent on the technical capacities of UN strategic partners and have reverted to a model of delivering primarily through implementing partners.

9. UNHCR Sudan will find it challenging to continue to provide VFM leading multiple sectors in the medium- to long-term.

Findings from this evaluation largely support UNHCR's decision to increase their technical capacities across various sectors given the positive effect it had on the quality of interventions and refugee-related coordination. However, unless there is another significant influx or return, it will become increasingly difficult to demonstrate value-added to refugees and affected populations of broad sectoral coverage given UNHCR's relatively high operating cost along with its lack of development expertise. Ministries at national level and, especially state level, are likely to be key partners although studies have cautioned against an overreliance on government capacities when designing an exit strategy since this often compromises sustainability.

10. The lack of a capacity building strategy based on a needs assessment has reduced the effectiveness of UNHCR's programme.

Building national capacities has been a key component of UNHCR RRRPs which provided UNHCR and its partners, both international and more experienced national NGOs, with the opportunity to demonstrate VFM and justify the relatively higher costs of international agencies compared to local actors. A key objective in the Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategy for 2017-2019 led by OCHA in Sudan was building national capacities. With the notable exception of annual training for partners in UNHCR project management and reporting, training provided to date has been on an ad hoc basis without clear links to capacity assessments of partners.

Summarized Recommendations

Ten recommendations targeted primarily at UNHCR Sudan and its partners appear at the end of this report. These are summarised in the list below:

UNHCR Operations

- R1.** Move to targeted assistance to address critical unmet needs combined with longer-term livelihood support.
- R2.** Strengthen accountability to affected populations, refugees and host communities, to promote dignity, ownership, cost effectiveness and sustainability of interventions.
- R3.** Promote protection mainstreaming in UNHCR, GoS partners and implementing partners through awareness-raising, capacity building, integrated approaches and improvements in community-level feedback and complaints systems.
- R4.** Adopt a transitional (modular) approach to durable shelters and permanent community infrastructure such as schools to increase coverage and community ownership while ensuring durability of completed structures.
- R5.** Improve partnership selection, supported through capacity building, to fill critical gaps and help ensure improved quality and accountability of UNHCR-supported interventions at a community level.
- R6.** Strengthen collection and management of monitoring data in a way that captures learning improves outcome level monitoring so as to better inform interventions and more clearly demonstrate contributions to strategic objectives.

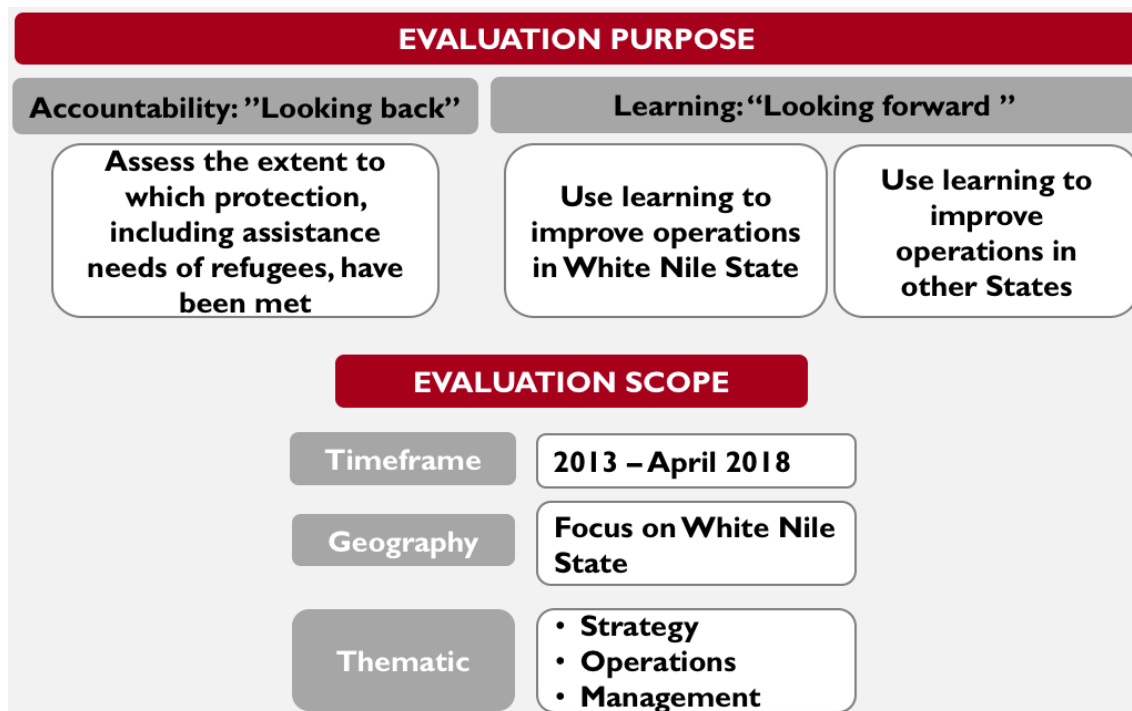
UNHCR Strategy

- R.7.** Develop 3-year multi-year strategy in consultations with partners which is divided into one-year annual plans and linked to the OCHA-led multi-year strategy. The strategy should include a robust emergency preparedness plan that is appropriately resourced.
- R8.** Further improve team work with strategic partners, including joint fundraising, improving alignment between RRRPs and HRP's and improving the efficiency of coordination meetings where UNHCR has a lead role.
- R9.** As a component of the multi-year strategy, include a description of a process for progressive handover of sector lead responsibilities to strategic partners and relevant line ministries where appropriate to allow UNHCR and their main partners to focus its resources on core areas; coordination, protection, addressing vulnerabilities and related capacity building.
- R10.** Integrate capacity building approach into UNHCR's way of working by developing a specific capacity building strategy in consultation with partners to building national capacities and proactively engaging partners to fill specific gaps.

Introduction

This is the Evaluation Report of UNHCR-led operations in WNS in Sudan. Figure 1 summarises its subject, purpose and scope.

Figure 1 – Evaluation subject, scope and purpose



The influx of South Sudanese refugees began in late 2013, mainly into WNS, and continued into 2018 with additional large influxes in 2016 and 2017, including into East and South Darfur and Kordofan states further to the west. The exodus has been mainly driven by deteriorating food security and continuing violence in South Sudan. UNHCR has been working closely with the GoS to deliver assistance and protection services to refugees.

UNHCR Sudan commissioned this evaluation for both accountability and learning purposes, with emphasis on generating lessons learnt and identifying examples of good practice to support improvements to the ongoing refugee response in WNS which may subsequently also be applied to the wider refugee response in other parts of Sudan.

This evaluation covered the response by UNHCR and its partners between December 2013 and April 2018 and includes visits to the eight refugee camp sites in WNS, refugee hosting communities and reception centres. The status of out-of-camp populations of South Sudanese refugees was also reviewed, both to identify potentially useful lessons that have contributed to populations becoming self-sustaining and also evaluate UNHCR’s protection role for out-of-camp populations.

In addition to assessing the overall effectiveness of the response, the evaluation focused on strategy, coordination, management and operational arrangements – with emphasis on the semi-remote management context and quality assurance (including capacity building). Protection and the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), public health and nutrition sectors were identified in the TOR as requiring a particular focus. It was also recognised that other sectors, such as shelter and food security, have been priority needs during certain periods and would also need to be considered, taking account of the constraints imposed by time and technical profile of the team members.

The **evaluation purpose** aimed to assess the extent to which protection, including assistance needs of refugees, have been met and to gauge the degree to which timely operational adjustments or revisions in strategic direction or coordination mechanisms have been made since the beginning of the crisis to meet the emerging needs of the refugee population.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the evaluation is attached as an annex to this report.

Country and Operating Context

2.1. Sudan Context

Since Sudan gained independence in 1956 the country has experienced political instability characterized by a series of alternating forms of democratic and single-party governments. A series of prolonged armed conflicts began in 2003 in Southern Sudan and Darfur that subsequently spread to eastern Sudan and Blue Nile in 2005 and later in South Kordofan during 2011 which resulted in loss of life and negative impacts on livelihoods. In line with the stipulations of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), a referendum took place in Southern Sudan regarding the creation of an independent state, which found the majority favouring independence. South Sudan officially declared its independence on 9 July 2011.

Sudan is a low income and food deficit country. Sudan's economy was severely weakened when it lost 75 percent of its oil revenues following South Sudan independence in July 2011. According to World Bank data, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 2015 was US\$1,840. Humanitarian agencies and the Sudanese population in general, have had to deal with economic impacts of shortages of foreign exchange that has impacted fuel supplies¹ and seen annual inflation rates rise as high as 52 percent during January 2018.²

2.2. Background to the Crisis in South Sudan

Following decades of conflict, there was cautious hope for South Sudan during a relatively brief period of political stability after they gained independence in July 2011. This changed on 15 December 2013 when inter-ethnic fighting broke out between government troops following a power struggle between the president and his former deputy.

Despite a functioning humanitarian coordination system and the presence of a relatively large UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the manner in which the crisis escalated into a full-blown regional humanitarian crisis was unexpected. It quickly escalated into a major protection crisis affecting girls, boys, women and men which resulted in ethnic-based harassment, widespread displacement and SGBV, forced recruitment and tens of thousands of deaths.³

¹ Reuters "Fuel shortage hits Sudan as dollar crisis hampers imports" April 24, 2018

<https://www.reuters.com/article/sudan-energy/fuel-shortage-hits-sudan-as-dollar-crisis-hampers-imports-idUSL3N1S15R6>

² Source: Tradingeconomics.com | Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics

³ <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/50000-and-not-counting-south-sudans-war-dead>

Once it became clear that this had escalated into a major humanitarian crisis, a Level 3 emergency was declared by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in February 2014, along with a warning that the current crisis was likely to affect more than one in two South Sudanese by the end of 2014.⁴

The conflict has shown no sign of abating. Instead, 2017 witnessed an increased influx of South Sudanese refugees into the six neighboring countries (the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan) and UNHCR revised their estimate of the population of South Sudanese refugees in the region to a figure of 3.1 million by December 2018.⁵

2.3. Timing of the evaluation

The evaluation took place during a period of transition. One transition was a re-focus on medium- to long-term solutions as the rate of influx decreased and the situation stabilised. Other important changes in the operating context that preceded the evaluation included improved access to PoC by UNHCR and partner staff, the decision by GoS to designate South Sudanese as refugees and the partial lifting of sanctions by the US government in October 2017.⁶

2.4. Policy Environment

Sudan has had a longstanding history of hosting refugees and asylum seekers and, during 2018, was hosting refugees from the Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. In 1974 Sudan ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in 1978. Sudan's reservations to Article 26 of the 1951 Convention to restricting freedom of movement of refugees has led to encampment policies and penalization of refugees who attempt to leave the camps in eastern Sudan where refugees are mostly from Eritrea.⁷ Sudan continues to be a source, transit and destination country for irregular mixed movements, including asylum-seekers and refugees using the East African North-bound migratory route through Libya to Europe. Trafficking, kidnapping and smuggling of people, remain major protection concerns.

⁴ OCHA (2014) South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2014

⁵ UNHCR South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan: January – December 2018

⁶ <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/sudan.aspx> The work of the evaluation team was facilitated since team members were able to obtain necessary visas and travel permits without difficulty.

⁷ UNHCR (2010) Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report - Universal Periodic Review: Sudan

The influx of South Sudanese refugees that began in late 2013 mainly into WNS and early 2016 into East and South Darfur continues, driven by deteriorating food security and continuing violence in South Sudan. As of February 2018, over 760,000 South Sudanese refugees have sought safety in Sudan. Results of assessments carried out during 2016 in refugee sites in WNS showed malnutrition rates to be above emergency levels.⁸

The Government of Sudan has maintained an open border policy allowing safe and unrestricted access to its territory for those fleeing the conflict in South Sudan. However, access of UNHCR and other international humanitarian actors has been restricted. Prior to September 2016, the South Sudanese in Sudan were treated as ‘brothers and sisters’, and not officially recognised as refugees by Sudan. As such, they fell under a general policy response of HAC. On 1 September 2016, however, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between UNHCR and COR as a framework which clarifies the status of South Sudanese arrivals as refugees and COR's role in coordinating the response on behalf of the Sudanese government. COR subsequently took over responsibility for camp management from Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in March 2017. Since then, access by UNHCR and its partners to populations of concern has improved although challenges continue to adversely affect the quality of the response.

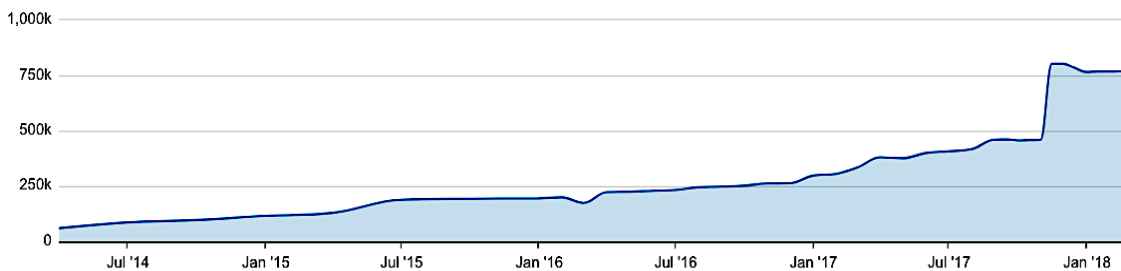
After refugee status was declared for the South Sudanese, government authorities have periodically called for limits on their movement and employment. UNHCR continued to advocate for the continuation of the so-called “Four Freedoms” that the South Sudanese were granted in principle in Sudan, including the freedom to move and work, enjoy residence and hold property. UNHCR Sudan was also involved in ongoing discussions with GoS on encampment versus out-of-camp alternatives for the South Sudanese, including for the large South Sudanese population in Khartoum.

2.5. Refugee Population

With the continuously deteriorating situation in South Sudan, the general consensus is that the situation is unlikely to stabilize in the foreseeable future, and that instability and food insecurity will persist, forcing increasing numbers of refugees to enter Sudan and other countries of asylum. UNHCR's 2018 RRRP foresaw a potential increase of around 20% in the South Sudanese refugee population during 2018 to just over 1 million refugees, second only to Uganda as a country of asylum for South Sudanese refugees. As shown in Figure 2 below, there was been a gradual increase in the South Sudanese refugee population in Sudan since 2013. The sudden increase in numbers during 2017 can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the Government of Sudan (GoS) and UNHCR agreed to include those South Sudanese who were in Sudan from before 2013, most of whom were residing in Khartoum. And the second factor was another 195,000 new arrivals.

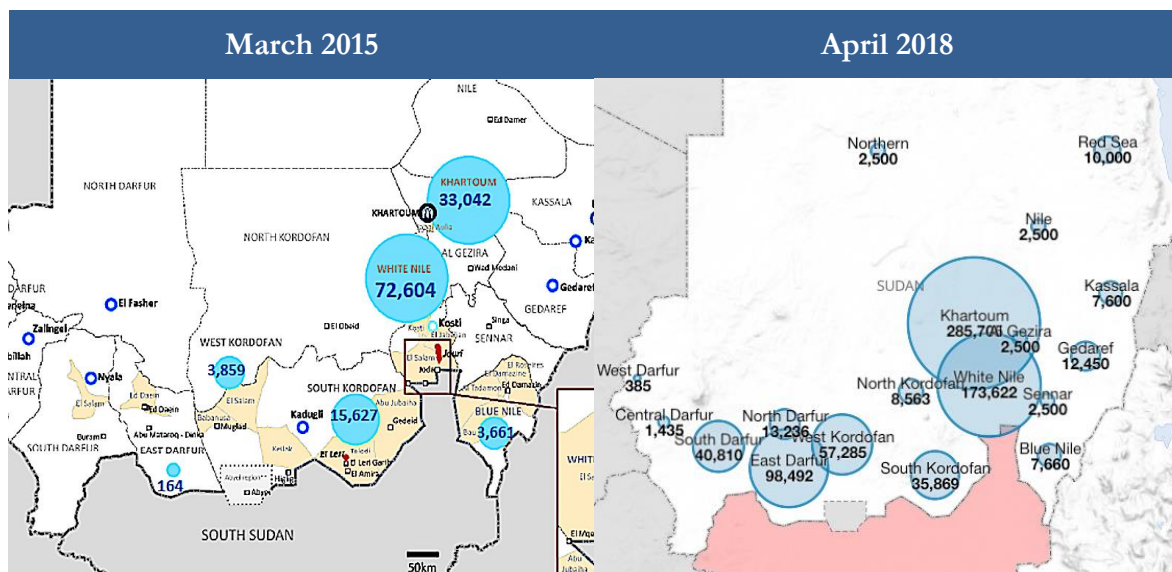
⁸ UNHCR (2016d) Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) WNS-Sudan: Final Report.

Figure 2 – South Sudanese Refugee Arrivals in Sudan: Dec 2013 – Jan 2018⁹



As illustrated in Figure 3 below, new arrivals were initially concentrated in WNS. Since 2015, not only have numbers of refugees staying in WNS swelled, but also created sizeable concentrations in Khartoum and to the west in Kordofan and Darfur and, by early 2018, 78% of the total South Sudanese refugee population were believed to be residing outside camps.

Figure 3 – Registered South Sudanese Refugee Population in Sudan¹⁰



⁹ COS, UNHCR & WFP (2017)

¹⁰ COS, UNHCR & WFP (2015, 2018)

The vast majority of refugees residing in WNS are either of Nuer or Shilluk ethnicity. Some 78% of South Sudanese refugees were believed to be staying outside camps. WNS was atypical in Sudan in that the majority of refugees were residing in one of eight camps (see map in Annex 2).¹¹ Out of a total population of 168,950 South Sudanese refugees in WNS at the end of January 2018, over 85% were registered as residents in camps. During the site visit in April 2018, an additional site was being prepared to relocate 5,000 families primarily as a way of decongesting Khor Al Waral, which had the largest camp population.

2.6. Coordination and Planning for the Response

In close collaboration with relevant Government of Sudan (GoS) entities at federal, state and local levels, UNHCR has coordinated the overall humanitarian response for South Sudanese refugees with both strategic and operational partners under the RCF mechanism, which was formerly the RMS. This forum was being co-chaired by COR, Sudan’s government body overseeing refugee affairs. The RCF coordination mechanism operated separately from the existing inter-agency framework established for the response to internally displaced people. At the same time, RCF members participate in the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISCG) chaired by OCHA with the status of a “cluster”, that helped to ensure information exchange and coordination across refugee and IDP responses.

UNHCR work in Sudan, and in other countries in the region, was guided by annual UNHCR-led RRRP for South Sudanese refugees. Estimated population figures and financial requirements information for 2014-2017 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – RRRP Estimated Refugee Population & Financial Requirements: Sudan¹²

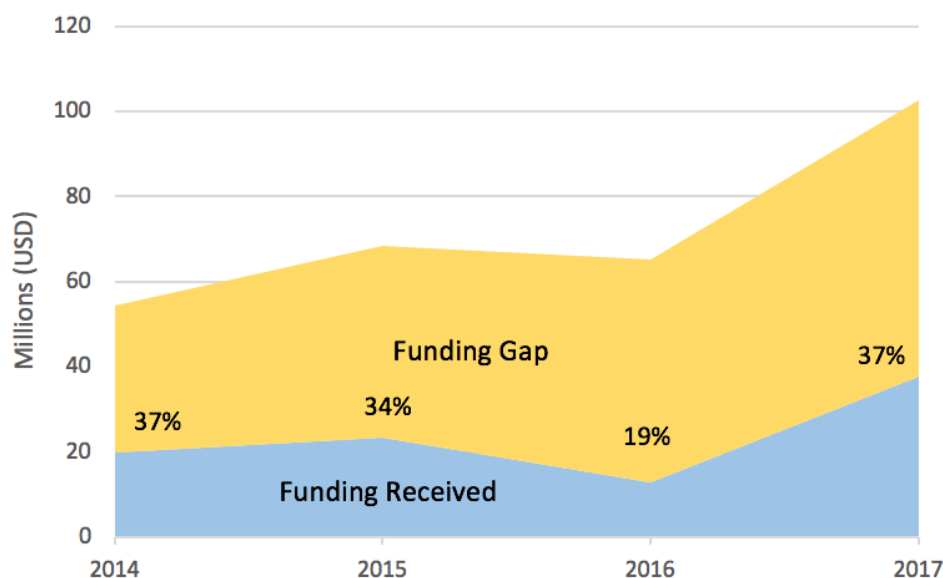
Time Period	Estimated Population	RRRP Requirements
January – December 2014*	42,011	USD 40,171,141
January – December 2015	109,970	USD 152,119,709
January – December 2016	273,000	USD 157,928,491
January – December 2017	477,000	USD 221,676,463
January – December 2018	1,000,000	USD 327,213,331

¹¹ The eight camps are Khor Al Waral, Um Sangour, Al Redis 1, Al Redis 2, El Kashafa, Jouri, Alagaya, and Dabat Bosin. There are reception centers in the border area where refugees reside temporarily at Joda and Um Jalala.

¹² Source: UNHCR (*2014 figures are from the inter-agency appeal for the South Sudanese Refugee Emergency)

As with other countries in the region hosting South Sudanese refugees, contributions were well short of estimated requirements. There seemed to be little likelihood of improvement during the remainder of 2018 (Figure 4) since, at the end of April, UNHCR’s appeal for \$260 million to meet the needs of refugees in Sudan was only 14 per cent funded.¹³

Figure 4 – UNHCR Programme in Sudan: Contributions vs. Requirements



Source: UNHCR

2.7. Operational Context

In addition to restrictions on gaining access to PoC, especially from the beginning of the crisis until mid-2016, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies have faced a number of other operational constraints. These include the lack of available land suitable for refugee settlement, limited national capacities and poor infrastructure (e.g. roads). These, and other contextual factors, are described in detail in the following section under EQ2.

¹³ Source Middle East Monitor May 6, 2018: <http://svdaily.net/index.php/new-posts/local-news/14700-sudan-arrests-5-human-traffickers>

Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Phases

The evaluation was divided into three-phases: inception, data collection and synthesis. Key milestones during the evaluation process were the inception report that was reviewed by the Evaluation Reference Group, a field visit to Sudan and a workshop facilitated by the evaluation team at the end of the field visit.

3.2 Evaluation Questions and Analytical Framework

This evaluation aimed to draw evidence-informed conclusions based on OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of appropriateness/relevance, effectiveness, coordination, connectedness and coverage to respond to the five key evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this evaluation listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Key Evaluation Questions

No.	Theme	Evaluation criteria
EQ 1	To what extent are UNHCR and partner strategies and for the refugee response relevant and appropriate, taking into account the operational environment and evolving context?	Relevance
EQ 2	To what extent have UNHCR and partners achieved expected results, highlighting key contributing and constraining factors?	Effectiveness
EQ 3	How well has UNHCR exercised its refugee response coordination responsibilities?	Coordination, effectiveness
EQ 4	To what extent have medium and longer-term objectives and solutions been given due consideration in planning and decision-making processes?	Connectedness, effectiveness, coordination
EQ 5	To what extent have UNHCR-led protection and assistance interventions been able to reach Persons of Concern?	Coverage, relevance, effectiveness

An analytical matrix was developed based on these evaluation questions together with indicators and potential sources of evidence to guide data collection and subsequent analysis. The evaluation team used this to develop an interview guide (Annex 6), collate data and make it easier to build a chain of evidence from findings to conclusions to recommendations.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation team employed a mixed-methods approach to collect relevant qualitative and quantitative data which began during the inception phase with a desk review and preliminary interviews with 11 key informants. Preliminary discussions with field-based staff also helped ensure that the field visit to Sudan proceeded smoothly.

Key informants interviewed during data collection phase were purposely selected based on stakeholder mapping developed during the inception phase. In addition to staff of UNHCR and implementing partners in Sudan, representatives from government (national and state level), the private sector, UN agencies, refugees, host community members, international and national NGOs were also interviewed (Table 3). Interviewees in WNS include 69 South Sudanese refugees and 29 members of host communities. A list of key informants and breakdown of focus group discussions (FGD) is attached as an annex.

Table 3 – Summary of Key Informants and Focus Group Discussions

White Nile State	Interviewees	♂	♀	Total	FGD
	UNHCR	8	2	10	0
Other interviewees	86	44	130	14	
SUB-TOTAL	94	46	140	14	

Khartoum	Interviewees	♂	♀	Total	FGD
	UNHCR	14	8	22	0
Other interviewees	26	8	34	1	
SUB-TOTAL	40	16	56	1	

Regional and Global	Interviewees	♂	♀	Total	FGD
	UNHCR	1	3	4	0
Other interviewees	2	0	2	0	
SUB-TOTAL	3	3	6	0	

Overall	Interviewees	♂	♀	Total	FGD
	UNHCR	23	13	36	0
Other interviewees	114	52	166	15	
GRAND TOTAL	137	65	202	15	

The team collected additional documents from partners during field visits including country strategies, assessment reports, monitoring reports, presentations, evaluations and lessons learned reviews. The team facilitated orientation meetings with staff in UNHCR Sudan at the beginning of the country visit to clarify the purpose and proposed methodology and adjust the itinerary.

The evaluation team used a participatory rapid assessment tool during refugee and host FGDs to obtain community perspectives on three accountability components; information sharing, participation and feedback/complaints handling. These are key components of the IASC framework for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), the Core Humanitarian

Standard (CHS) and core actions in the UNHCR AGD Policy. The tool used by the team is attached as Annex 7.

There was a generally good level of engagement with the evaluation process of staff from UNHCR and, with only a few exceptions, their partners. It was evident that most UNHCR staff viewed this evaluation as a useful learning exercise and this, along with the excellent logistic support provided, greatly facilitated the team's work to mitigate these constraints and helped to help the evaluation team develop a reasonable evidence base from which to draw concrete conclusions.

3.4 Evaluation Validation Processes

During the final stages of the field visit to Sudan the evaluation team facilitated an interagency workshop¹⁴ where UNHCR and partner staff based in Khartoum and in WNS participated. The team also facilitated separate debriefing sessions for UNHCR staff in Khartoum and at UNHCR Headquarters (HQ) in Geneva. During each session the team presented preliminary findings and hypotheses and provided participants with opportunities to validate these and complement with additional data. Participants found the preliminary findings and hypotheses to be valid, while suggesting minor corrections and suggestions for improvement. Feedback from these debriefing sessions, subsequent desk research and key informant interviews helped to inform the conclusions and recommendations presented in this report.

3.5 Constraints and Limitations

The main constraints and limitations had already been identified during the inception phase and contingency planning thus helped to mitigate their effects. The main constraints and limitations encountered during this evaluation included:

- **Availability and quality of data** from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) by UNHCR and their partners was limited, particularly outcome data. Time and capacity constraints ruled out systematic primary collection through surveys and instead the evaluation team compensated for gaps in reliable quantitative data by collecting qualitative data and creating opportunities to triangulate and validate findings whenever possible.
- **The small size and limited technical profiles of the two-person evaluation team**, along with time constraints meant the team was not in a position to carry out detailed technical assessments of all of the sectors covered under the UNHCR refugee response. The evaluation team did carry out a rapid assessment of technical capacities of UNHCR and partners to provide a basis on which to assess the quality of monitoring and quality control. A key part of this assessment included an examination of how UNHCR and partners have been complying with their own commitments, how standards have been contextualised using international standards such as Sphere. The team supplemented

¹⁴ The workshop agenda is attached as an annex to this report.

this analysis by key informant interviews with technical staff, including some not directly associated with UNHCR interventions.

- **Interviews of key informants.** Staff turnover, particularly international staff, meant that many key informants were no longer in Sudan. Some key informants who had previously worked for UNHCR in Sudan were thus either interviewed by phone or in person by the Team Leader at UNHCR HQ.
- **Cost-effectiveness analysis:** It was evident during the inception phase that, given the limited scope, team profile, time constraints and lack of relevant data, it would not be feasible for the team to carry out a systematic VFM or cost-effective analysis. The team instead used data from interviews and proxy indicators to carry out a qualitative assessment of VFM, including the extent to which cost considerations were included during decision-making processes.

Response to Evaluation Questions

This section presents findings for each of the five evaluation questions (EQ) listed in the TOR. For each EQ, there is a brief summary of findings followed by a narrative structured according to sub-questions for each EQ that lays out the supporting evidence base.

EQ 1: Relevance of UNHCR and Partner Strategies

EQ 1

To what extent are UNHCR and partner strategies and for the refugee response relevant and appropriate, taking into account the operational environment and evolving context?

This evaluation question looks at the clarity and relevance of the strategies of UNHCR and its partners, whether these sufficiently tailored to the specific needs and priorities of Persons of Concern (PoC) and the extent that they involved participation, community-based approaches.

Summary response to EQ 1.

- UNHCR RRRPs were appropriately focused on three priorities: 1) maintenance of emergency response capacities, 2) achievement of minimum emergency sectoral standards and 3) facilitation of durable solutions.
- The UNHCR RRRP has been an annual regional strategy covering several countries and was not viewed by many donors and partners as sufficiently specific for guiding their response in Sudan.
- Due to limited access until mid-2016, UNHCR channelled most of its resources through the SRCS to meet needs of South Sudanese refugees while positioning itself to work with a wider range of partners. UNHCR used the Refugee Coordination Model to guide collaboration with strategic partners who were already present in WNS.
- UNHCR was initially dependent on assessment data from secondary sources, primarily from SRCS which GoS designated as the agency responsible for the response. UNHCR's remote management and monitoring systems were insufficient to remove doubts about the appropriateness of the assistance provided. The operating environment significantly improved for UNHCR after mid-2017 in WNS.
- UNHCR's emphasis on registration and legitimization was an appropriate priority to enable refugees to support themselves. At the same time, the scale of unmet needs in shelter and sanitation called into question the relevance of intervention strategies for these sectors and how investments have been prioritised.
- UNHCR's Protection Strategy gave priority to providing targeted support to persons with disabilities and other specific needs, though it lacked provide guidance on mainstreaming protection in different sectors.

Summary response to EQ 1.

- The focus in the 2017 AGD assessment on basic needs without considering gaps in participation/inclusion and communication/transparency was inconsistent with UNHCR's global policy guidance. An element missing in virtually all of UNHCR's sectoral strategies was about promoting community participation and ownership.

Clarity of UNHCR's Regional Refugee Response Plan

UNHCR's annual RRRPs describe an appropriate intervention strategy that highlights UNHCR's key protection role and coordination of refugee assistance. With the overall goal of **ensuring the effective protection of refugees**, the three priorities in UNHCR Sudan's RRRPs since 2014 have been to 1) **maintain an emergency response capacity**, 2) **achieve at least minimum emergency standards** across sectors for their existing programme and 3) **facilitate solutions** through promoting self-reliance and host community support.

One of the main challenges that UNHCR Sudan faced in developing a "clear" strategy during the first three years of the response was the designation by GoS of South Sudanese asylum-seekers as "brothers and sisters" and **it was only in September 2016 that the government recognised South Sudanese as refugees**. As a result, neither UNHCR nor its usual government counterpart in Sudan, COR, had an official role. Faced with these challenges, UNHCR aimed to meet needs of the South Sudanese through a variety of intervention strategies:

- Agreeing to a requirement by GoS to initially channel all assistance through the SRCS while positioning itself to work with a range of partners, including with line ministries at state level;
- Applying the Refugee Coordination Model published in November of 2014 to collaborate with strategic partners, notably with WHO in implementing health interventions and UNICEF in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education; and
- Direct and indirect, with support from the HCT, advocacy with donors and GoS to formalise UNHCR's role.

Although challenges remained, notably worst-case scenarios of further large influxes and/or an incident which turns the host population against refugees, these milestones indicated that for the first time since the crisis began, **UNHCR Sudan had an opportunity from mid-2017 onwards to implement their strategy in a much-improved operating environment**.

A challenge for UNHCR has been the lack of an overall country-specific strategy. The UNHCR RRRP has been a regional strategy covering several countries and was not sufficiently specific for guiding the response in Sudan. UNHCR Sudan tried to address this gap through development of different sectoral strategies in 2016 and a protection strategy drafted during 2017. UNHCR Sudan participated in the elaboration of the annual Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) for Sudan. However, similar to the RRRP, the HRP covers multiple dimensions and both donor and partner interviewees highlighted the lack of detail about the lack of clarity of UNHCR's vision for its programme in Sudan.

Guided by lessons learned from protracted crises,¹⁵ OCHA Sudan led the development of a multi-year interagency humanitarian strategy for 2017-2019 which considers refugee populations, which includes a brief section drafted by the RCF entitled “The Refugee Response: moving towards a multi-year approach in Sudan”.¹⁶ The UNHCR sectoral strategies that have been developed covered multiple years but **UNHCR Sudan lacked an overall multi-year strategy for Sudan that defined and provided a measurable roadmap for its operations.** This gap made it more difficult for partners to align their own multi-year strategies and gain buy-in from major donors, most of whom already had their own multi-year strategies for this protracted crisis.¹⁷

Timeliness and Relevance of UNHCR Strategies

Since the crisis in South Sudan and subsequent scale of needs was unexpected, UNHCR was not alone amongst humanitarian agencies that were insufficiently prepared to respond. As the asylum-seekers flooding into WNS were not initially considered by GoS as refugees, UNHCR was not seen as having an official role, although their offer of funding for humanitarian assistance and infrastructure development in host communities was welcomed. This meant that **during the first two years of the response, UNHCR was largely dependent on assessment data from secondary sources, primarily from SRCS, due to lack of access.** Other international agencies experienced similar constraints.

Since UNHCR was the main source of refugee-related information in the HCT, lack of access made it difficult for the HCT or HC to prioritize in the absence of reliable assessment data. UNHCR’s role included leading the development of initial CERF proposals on behalf of the HCT. **Since UNHCR’s NGO partners were not able to access areas to undertake assessments for the distribution of NFIs and emergency shelter materials during 2014-2015, there were doubts about the appropriateness of the assistance provided and whether it had been provided according to need.**¹⁸

A series of assessments were carried out by UNHCR and their partners from 2016 onwards once access had improved and UNHCR had deployed technical staff. However, follow up assessments were compromised by another large influx during 2017 which UNHCR and partners were not fully prepared for and they were obliged to quickly re-prioritise resources to be able to respond appropriately.

In addition to specific assessments carried out by UNHCR and partners to inform interventions, UNHCR commissioned comprehensive strategic assessments including development of a “Safe Access to Fuel and Energy Sudan Strategy 2016-2020” and a livelihood assessment that looked at immediate and longer-term needs. UNHCR also carried out a JAM with WFP and COR, which was published in 2017. An assessment of refugees living outside camps led by UNICEF, with support from UNHCR and WFP, which was

¹⁵ Taylor, G., Kroidler, C. and Créac’h, Yves-Kim (2017) Evaluation of Multi-year Planning. OCHA (page 4)

¹⁶ OCHA (2017) Sudan: Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategy 2017-2019 (page 11)

¹⁷ The issue of multi-year strategies is explored in more detail under the response to EQ4.

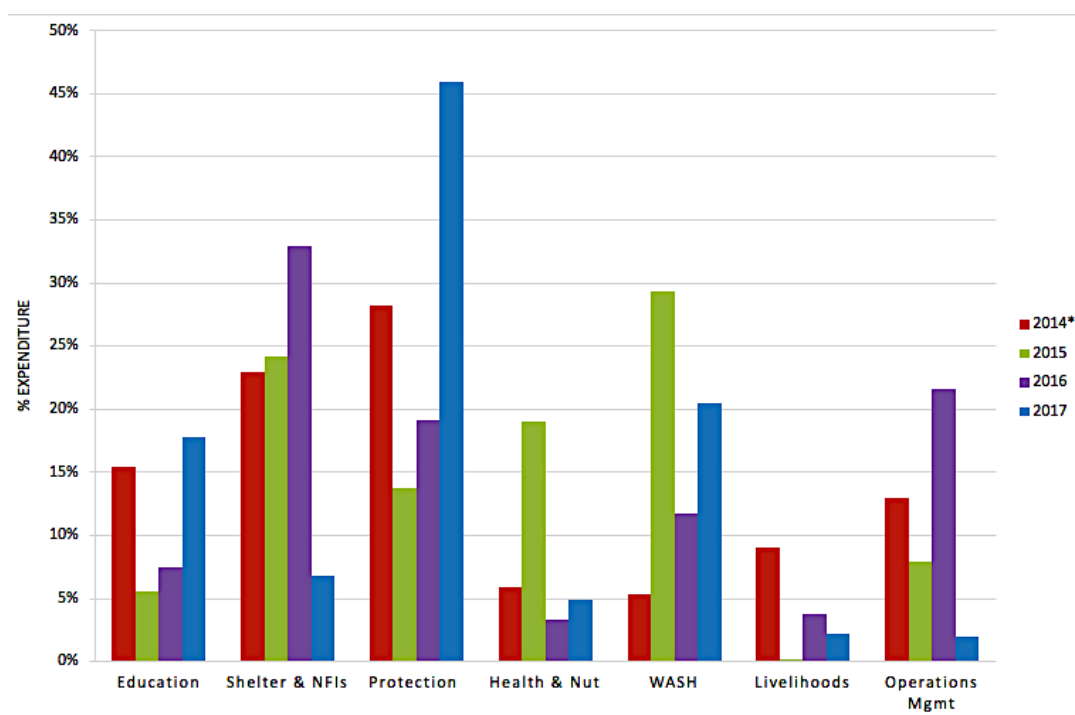
¹⁸ Mowjee, T. (2014) Independent Review of the Value Added of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in Sudan and key informant interviews.

published in May 2018, was expected to help fill gaps in the collective understanding for out-of-camp refugee populations.

Findings from this evaluation supported UNHCR's initial choice to prioritise protection and assistance needs of PoCs, but the implications of remote management and strategic partnerships did not receive sufficient attention in their strategic approach. UNHCR-led assessments were conducted relatively late, 2-3 years after the influx began and UNHCR's intervention options were limited by restrictions imposed by GoS, lack of experience with CBI and other factors. The team did not find any evidence of a mechanism to follow up on the results of interagency initiatives such as the JAM. Interviewees attributed these gaps to a combination of factors, including lack of access in the early part of the response, lack of funding, the need to respond to the renewed influx during 2017 and lack of a coherent interagency mechanism to follow up on joint assessments.

Figure 5 below illustrates how each sector/type of activity was prioritised, expressed as a percentage of total expenditures by all implementing partners during 2014-2017. Expenditures related to protection include several activities, including child protection, family re-unification, services for PoCs with specific needs, refugee reception and protection from crime, registration and profiling, civil registration/civil status document and combatting effects of armed conflict. Protection-related activities accounted for the majority of expenditures during 2017, primarily for registration-related activities. UNHCR's emphasis on registration and legitimization of their status through the provision of identification cards was an appropriate priority as a way of giving refugees legitimacy and putting them in a position to support themselves. At the same time, the scale of unmet needs in shelter and sanitation throughout the period under review called into question the appropriateness of the intervention strategies for these sectors. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has funded their own health and nutrition interventions which, together with WFP's contributions to nutrition, accounted for the relatively low allocations for these sectors.

Figure 5 – UNHCR Implementing Partner Expenditures by Type of Activity¹⁹



A key part of UNHCR’s strategy to promote durable solutions and mitigate congestion of camps in WNS is to construct semi-permanent shelters equipped with family latrines. The first stage, which had already started at the time of the field visit, was planned to accommodate 5,000 refugee households living in Alwaral camp. In view of constraints regarding availability of land and scale of investment required in an unfavourable funding environment, it was uncertain how quickly the refugee population could be settled using this approach. While the concept of family units has been found to be appropriate in countries like Uganda,²⁰ the evaluation team agreed with the assessment by a recent donor monitoring mission that this could aggravate disparities between standards of assistance provided to refugees and create pull factors and jealousies if risks were not managed.

UNHCR’s registration systems have improved awareness regarding the **specific needs of vulnerable groups and individuals**. Due to access and other constraints described elsewhere in this report, UNHCR Sudan was only able to carry out their first participatory Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) assessment in WNS during late 2017, even though this is something that would normally have been integrated into UNHCR’s annual planning. UNHCR Sudan has prioritised addressing vulnerability in its 2017 Protection Strategy, which

¹⁹ Each sector is expressed as a percentage of overall estimated expenditures for that particular year. 2014 figures are from the budget, since specific expenditure data was not available for WNS operations. Expenditure data is estimated since UNHCR did not begin to disaggregate costs by state until 2018. No 2014 estimated expenditure data was available for WNS so percentages are based on budgeted amounts. These figures are only for UNHCR funding and do not include important contributions from other humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF, WFP, international NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society.

²⁰ UNHCR (2017) Uganda Response Plan 2017, South Sudan Refugee Situation – April 2017.

gave priority to addressing needs of separated and unaccompanied children, prevention and response to SGBV and targeted support to persons with disabilities and other specific needs. Other sector strategies also identify these groups as a priority and **an important element missing from UNHCR’s Protection Strategy does not however provide guidance on how protection will be mainstreamed in different sectors.**

Participatory planning approaches

While the 2017 AGD assessment provided an opportunity to better understand disaggregated needs, the results have been presented as a list of basic needs and not as an evidence base that could inform a robust strategy that addresses specific priority needs and promotes participation. The focus in the AGD assessment on basic needs without considering gaps in participation/inclusion and communication/transparency is not consistent with UNHCR’s global policy guidance and was observed to reinforce dependency and decrease cost effectiveness.²¹ **A missing element in virtually all of UNHCR’s strategies is about promoting community participation and ownership.** This issue is explored further under EQ2 and EQ5 below.

Key informants from implementing partners felt that UNHCR’s strategic planning process in 2017 had been more participatory than during past years although UNHCR did lead joint planning with other HCT members 2014 during the development of proposals for CERF funding.²²

EQ 2: Achievement of Expected Results

EQ 2	<i>To what extent have UNHCR and partners achieved expected results, highlighting key contributing and constraining factors?</i>
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This evaluation question seeks to assess performance in UNHCR-led interventions in WNS. This includes the key contributing or constraining factors influencing the overall effectiveness of UNHCR’s response, intended and unintended results and UNHCR’s contribution to building capacity of local partners and national Government. This question also examines adherence to relevant technical quality standards, VFM, M&E and learning systems, effectiveness of remote management systems and the provision of staffing, financial and logistic resources to achieve intended results.

²¹ Extract from UNHCR’s AGD Policy (2018 version): “Giving a voice to all members of a community allows us to identify and incorporate the capacities and priorities of persons of concern in the development of programmes, thus minimizing the risk of excluding them. In turn, the quality of participatory processes will increase community ownership of programmes and allow monitoring and course corrections to be driven by the communities themselves.” (page 7).

²² Baker, J. (2015) Independent Review of the Value Added of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in the Countries Affected by the South Sudan Crisis: Regional Synthesis Report

Summary response to EQ 2.

- Mortality rates have remained below emergency thresholds, indicating that contributions of UNHCR, their partners and other humanitarian agencies including UNICEF, WFP, WHO, SRCS and other humanitarian agencies have collectively helped to ensure the refugee population received life-saving support they required even though emergency thresholds were exceeded in many sectors.
- Improvements were observed in water to the extent that standards were comparable to local populations. Sanitation, shelter, nutrition and education have remained well below standards and continued to be a concern. These gaps were partly attributed to GoS requirements that UNHCR invest in relatively costly permanent community infrastructure. UNHCR's approach has helped to reduced fuelwood consumption by some 50 percent, although wood cutting remained a priority environmental concern for host communities.
- There was significant variation of needs amongst the refugee population. NFI and shelter assistance has been targeted since 2017. Other assistance, including WFP-supplied food aid, has been provided via blanket distributions. Some beneficiaries were found to be selling relief assistance to raise money to purchase other items.
- Delays in refugee registration and verification processes and credibility gaps in data have contributed to inefficiencies and has led to the perception that considerable numbers of refugees registered spent most of their time outside camps.
- COR's involvement has helped to improve the knowledge and understanding of UNHCR's protection mandate and the role of the host government amongst stakeholders. The "5 plus 5" committees composed of provided a replicable good practice example of an effective forum for resolving intercommunal conflicts to reinforce protection.
- Although UNHCR's response has been primarily led by national agencies and staff, UNHCR has not had a capacity building strategy and capacity needs assessments do not appear to be part of periodic partner reviews.
- The majority of UNHCR and partner technical staff were unclear on how to contextualise and apply Sphere standards.
- With the exception of shelter and non-food items (NFI), where PDM data has been systematically collected since 2017, reporting by UNHCR and partners has been primarily at the activity/output level. The team found little evidence of UNHCR-led or partner lessons-learned reviews that could inform annual planning exercises.
- UNHCR's global registration system and standards has contributed to tensions with WFP, mainly due to the latter's need for frequent updating of refugee registration data.
- Information management systems tended to prioritise donor reporting, with lower priority given to continuous improvement and learning for field operations. Donor

Summary response to EQ 2.

representatives confirmed there had been a significant improvement in the quality of information provided by UNHCR.

- UNHCR staff in Sudan had no previous experience of remote management systems and received little support from the region or from HQ. This was less important for camps after access improved but remained relevant for PoCs staying in difficult-to-access areas.
- UNHCR suffered from a lack of capacity since the beginning of the crisis which influenced the efficiency and effectiveness of their response. By the end of 2017, UNHCR had considerably expanded their technical capacities, resulting in a decreased dependence on deployments from UNHCR's Emergency Response Team (ERT) and standby partners where UNHCR had faced some challenges.
- UNHCR has only been able to mobilise 19-37% of their annual funding requirements specified in the RRRPs during successive years. UNHCR Sudan has been able to cover its own operations budget but has lacked resources to adequately cover unmet life-saving and longer-term needs.
- Relatively high operating and staff costs put pressure on UNHCR to demonstrate VFM for the South Sudanese refugee response. While UNHCR's specific technical expertise and overall contributions have helped to keep mortality rates below emergency thresholds, areas where UNHCR could have improved VFM included closer monitoring of major cost drivers, delays in updating/verifying registration data, low levels of community ownership of infrastructure, more systematic use of PDM data, and feedback from community complaints systems, greater use of CBI options, more strategic partner selection and improved preparedness based on lessons learned.
- UNHCR Sudan has faced multiple challenges in responding to this crisis, notably the initial decision by GoS to designate South Sudanese as "brothers and sisters" rather than as refugees, leaving UNHCR's role in the response unclear. After this was changed to refugee status, UNHCR was able to position itself take on a more central role in the response in accordance with its mandate.

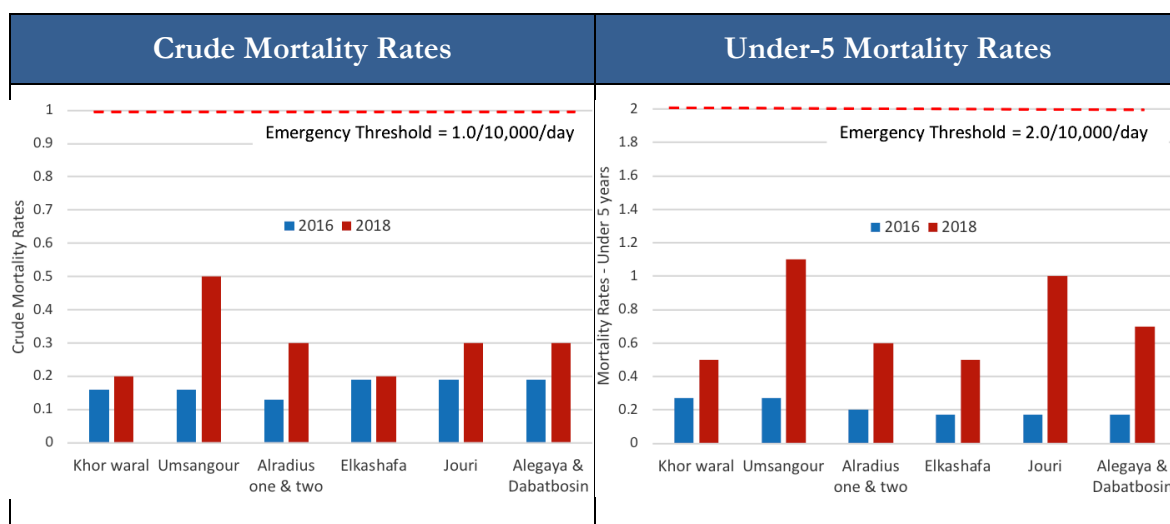
Intended and unintended results of the response

As already described, it proved difficult for the evaluation team to undertake a full assessment of results due to gaps and variable quality in the monitoring data that was available. **Routine reporting by UNHCR and the partners they are funding has been mainly at the activity/output level**, although mission reports by UNHCR and partners staff have provided some outcome data. **The exception has been for shelter and non-food items (NFI), for which PDM data has been systematically collected since 2017.** Lack of outcome data is an important finding in itself which led to the conclusion and corresponding recommendation that UNHCR Sudan needed to improve their systems. As described in the Methodology section, the evaluation team relied to a large extent on qualitative data from key informant interviews and FGDs together with secondary data drawn from monitoring reports and previous evaluations from UNHCR, partners and donors.

As UNHCR’s access improved and humanitarian agencies scaled up their assistance, a significant portion of the refugee population benefited from service standards that were comparable to those in surrounding host communities by early 2018. Although WNS saw some of the highest morbidity and mortality rates in Sudan during an outbreak of Acute Watery Diarrhoea during 2017, there were only 95 cases of infection and no deaths recorded in the refugee camps and surrounding host communities.²³ This achievement was viewed by interviewees as the result of effective joint action by MSF, MoH, UNICEF and UNHCR’s implementing partners working in the health and WASH sectors.

Mortality rates have remained below emergency thresholds, indicating that UNHCR’s contributions have helped to ensure the refugee population received life-saving support they required even while emergency thresholds were exceeded in various sectors. As shown in Figure 3 below, however, trends have not been positive, particularly for mortality rates amongst young children.

Figure 6 – Trends in Mortality Rates for each Camp: 2016 - 2018²⁴



Nutrition has been a joint effort by MSF, UNICEF, WFP support by UNHCR for MoH and SRCS. While some caution is needed when comparing the results of successive SENS surveys,²⁵ **based on preliminary results of the 2018 nutrition survey, there has been some improvements in nutritional status.** When the previous SENS was carried out in 2016, 7 out of 8 camps showed severe malnutrition rates (SAM) of 3-6 percent, well above the 2% emergency threshold. In the 2018 survey only two camps, Jouri and Khor waral,

²³ OCHA (2017) Humanitarian Bulletin: Sudan. Issue 19 | 14 - 27 August 2017

²⁴ Data from UNHCR (2016d) Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) WNS-Sudan: Final Report and UNHCR (2018c) Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) WNS-Sudan: Preliminary Report

²⁵ Some key influencing factors that should be considered when comparing results of the two surveys were the breaks in the food pipeline and also that the two surveys were carried out during different seasons; the 2016 SENS survey was conducted during September-October and the 2018 survey was conducted during March-April.

showed SAM rates of 3.7% and 6.1% respectively that exceeded the emergency threshold. Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates have also shown some improvements since the 2016 survey. The 2016 survey found GAM rates exceeding emergency threshold of 15% in 7 out of 8 camps, ranging between 15.2% in Alegaya and 21.8% in Jouri. The 2018 survey found GAM rates had been reduced to 13.1% - 14.3% (below the emergency threshold) in four camps, although GAM rates in the other four camps, Alradius 1&2, Umangour and Khor warel continued to show rates of between 16.1% - 19.4%.

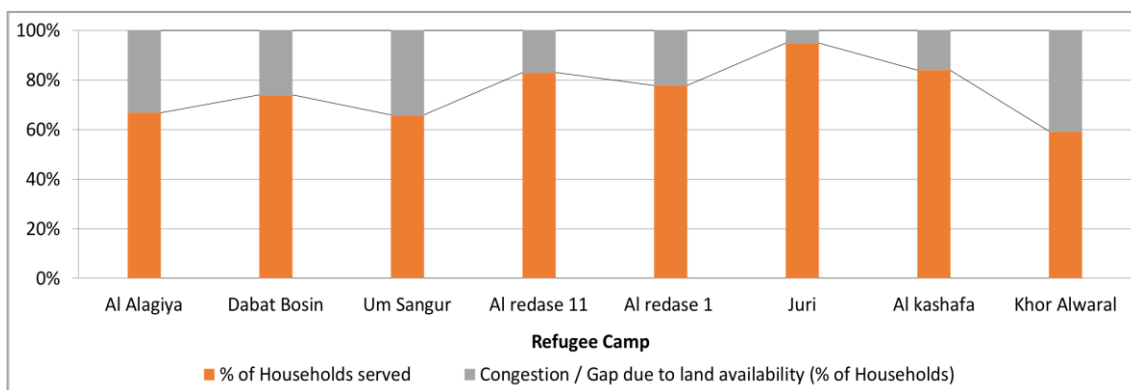
Supply of clean water has seen a progressive increase from an average of 8.5 litres/person/day (l/p/d) in 2015 to approximately 14l/p/d in 2017 despite a 170% increase in the registered refugee population during this period. Standards vary significantly by camp, however. The largest camp in WNS, Alwaral with a registered population of just under 50,000 at the end of 2017, was only receiving 6.6 l/p/d whereas refugees in Dabat Basin and Al redase 1 camps were each receiving more than the UNHCR standard of 20 l/p/d. One of the main reasons for these disparities is that systems were not designed to accommodate such large influxes.

Sanitation has been an ongoing concern since the establishment of the camps due in part to the soil composition that necessitates frequent desludging. According to UNHCR data, between 2015 and 2016 the ratio improved from an average of 110 persons/latrine to 20 persons/latrine. Due to the renewed influx and decommissioning of some latrines, the ratio increased to 54 persons/latrine during 2017. Again, there were significant variations between camps, from 12 persons/latrine in Alagaya camp to 326 persons/latrine in Um Sangour camp during 2015. In 2017, ratios varied from 28 persons/latrine to 126 persons/latrine (in Dabat Basin camp). Based on observations during the site visit and reports from donor monitoring missions, latrine was relatively low and open defecation was widespread. As a longer-term solution, UNHCR and partners were promoting the concept of family latrines although space and unit cost considerations would limit coverage. The Team Leader for this evaluation previously carried out independent reviews and in congested IDP camps in South Sudan and found **latrines to be much better maintained, a difference attributed in large part to far greater community participation and ownership than was observed in WNS.**²⁶

Variations in standards between camps are also evident in other sectors, as shown in Figure 6 below. In the case of temporary shelter, the main challenge is lack of land availability for more recent arrivals while new sites are being prepared (to decongest Alwaral) or while awaiting successful negotiations with landowners.

²⁶ Baker, J. and Kenyi, I. (2014) CARE South Sudan: Rapid Accountability Review and Baker, J. and Mosashvili, N. (2015) Real Time Review: DRC Corporate Emergency Response in South Sudan. Danish Refugee Council.

Figure 7 – Temporary shelter and NFI distributions coverage as of April 2018



Source: UNHCR

Results from the 2016 JAM and observations by the evaluation team during site visits also indicated there are significant differences in standards of living between households within the same camp.

UNHCR Sudan has regularly done PDM to check which NFI have been useful for recipients. Based on beneficiary feedback, UNHCR has identified the five most relevant items that it can provide with available funding, namely plastic sheets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, blankets and sleeping mats. **Targeting priorities for distributions of NFI and shelter materials have been guided since 2017 by Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).**²⁷ Some beneficiaries were found to be selling NFI²⁸ and food items²⁹ to raise money to food, medicines and pay for milling grains.

One result of UNHCR’s investments in relatively costly permanent school buildings in line with GoS requirements was that there were insufficient numbers of classrooms to meet minimum requirements for refugee populations. As of April 2018, UNHCR reported only 62% of school age children in school, a proportion that has been unchanged since 2016 and amounted to around 17,000 out of school children in early 2018. In secondary schools, there were only 798 out of 13,000 of that age group. These proportion of out of school children was expected to decrease when UNHCR completes the population validation exercise that was ongoing in May 2018 since some children are believed to be living outside the camps. Even with the anticipated reduction in student numbers, space was likely to

²⁷ UNHCR (2017) Standard Operating Procedure: Shelter and NFI Response for South Sudanese Refugees.

²⁸ UNHCR monitoring reports and Mowjee, T. (2014) Independent Review of the Value Added of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in Sudan

²⁹ Brewin, M. *et al.* (2017) Operation Evaluation: Sudan Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 200808: Support for food security and nutrition for conflict-affected and chronically vulnerable populations (1st July 2015 – 30th June 2017)

remain insufficient since teachers reported 150 students in a single classroom even though schools are running double shifts.³⁰

One of UNHCR's NGO implementing partners had planned to purchase school uniforms in Khartoum and distribute them in the camps. Instead, it was decided that refugees could produce uniforms themselves in the camps and receive a cash incentive. This was viewed by some key informants as a **positive lesson learned that could inform UNHCR's livelihood strategy**.

The importance of mitigating environmental degradation is a lesson that was previously learned from UNHCR's programme in eastern Sudan and in 2016 UNHCR drafted a "Safe Access to Fuel and Energy Strategy" with the aim of using these lessons to mitigate environmental impact.³¹ UNHCR reported that 15% of the main streets in refugee camps have solar lights. However, during site visits, **all of the batteries attached to the solar lights appeared to have been stolen and were non-functioning** which potentially increased SGBV risks and was a disincentive to latrine use. A key component of the strategy was to promote an improved cooking stove design and support reforestation activities. It also provided for a limited number of gas cookers.³² **A UNHCR mission during April 2018 found that fuel-efficient improved stoves had replaced other types of stoves in most households and refugee women claimed that wood consumption had been reduced by 50 percent.** During FGDs with host communities nevertheless reported that **wood cutting from the surrounding area remained a priority environmental concern.** Another adverse effect of the refugees mentioned during FGD with host communities was a significant decrease in the fish population, an issue that was not addressed in the livelihood strategy.

Protection

Delays in refugee registration and verification processes and credibility gaps in data have contributed to inefficiencies during the refugee response and have been a continuing frustration for stakeholders, notably for WFP which relies on UNHCR registration data to guide distributions of food aid. There was a widespread perception amongst key informants who were familiar with camps in WNS that **considerable numbers of refugees registered were spending most of their time outside camps.**

Due to access constraints, the first UNHCR registration exercise only started in April 2015 and wasn't completed until June 2016. Efforts to validate and update registration data following the large influx during 2017 were halted when computers were stolen during riots in the largest camp during August 2017.³³

³⁰ Sudan standard is 50 students per classroom. The first shift was during 07:00 -13:00 and the second was 14:00 – 17:00.

³¹ WFP Sudan similarly had a "Safe Access to Fuel and Energy programme" that could compliment UNHCR's.

³² According to UNHCR data for 2017, there were one-time distributions of cooking fuel to 4,000 vulnerable families, 9,000 families provided with improved stoves and training and 365 families provided with LPG gas stoves. These were distributions for both WNS and Darfur so it was not possible to see what had been given in White Nile.

³³ As of April 2018, the laptops needed to complete the verification exercise had not yet arrived mainly due to the time needed to get necessary import approvals from the US government due to the remaining sanctions.

UNHCR had been working with COR for many years and **one of the advantages of COR's involvement observed by the evaluation team was their knowledge and understanding of UNHCR's protection mandate and the role of the host government.** Key informants who had been involved in the response prior to COR's involvement reported resistance to UNHCR implementing its protection mandate.

While improved access and additional protection staff based in Kosti enabled UNHCR to increasingly fulfill its protection mandate, many challenges remained including reluctance of local authorities to allow UNHCR staff to conduct confidential interviews with refugees. There were also strong GoS sensitivities around SGBV which was attributed both to the lack of a formal Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) working group and the almost complete absence of reported cases up until 2017, even though informal discussions with refugees indicated that incidents did occur.

Protection has been a central part of UNHCR Sudan's RRRP. Findings from desk research, field observations and interviews indicate that protection could be better mainstreamed into sectoral activities. Many of the field staff based in Kosti Sub-Office were covering multiple sectors while executing UNHCR's protection mandate. However, as noted above, the Protection Strategy does not address mainstreaming, and roles and responsibilities in the associated workplan are limited to protection staff. As an example, the only mention of "protection" in UNHCR's WASH strategy was in the context of protecting water sources from contamination. UNHCR's partner ADRA supported the establishment of "5 plus 5" committees, consisting of five refugee representatives and five representatives from the host community. These committees met regularly and provided a replicable good practice example of an effective forum for mitigating and resolving intercommunal conflicts.

Capacity building of local partners and national Government

One of the key objectives in Sudan's Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategy for 2017-2019 is building national capacities.³⁴ UNHCR has identified protection is identified as a particular focus of capacity building in successive RRRPs.

According to interviewees, UNHCR Sudan and their international NGO partners have been conducting training, mostly on an ad-hoc basis such as an emergency training for government and staff in 2016. Building of national capacities does not appear to be integrated into workplans of UNHCR staff, apart from Child Protection training carried out in WNS³⁵ and for programme staff who have carried out financial and programme management training for implementing partners on an annual basis.

Based on interviews with UNHCR and GoS staff along with observations during coordination meetings, UNHCR technical focal points regularly provided advice to their

³⁴ Capacity building for partners and government counterparts (local communities, civil society, local and national institutions) will be prioritized across the response in order to strengthen national response mechanisms and ensure the sustainability of the response, including greater integration of refugee and IDP assistance within national social service systems" OCHA (2017) page 4

³⁵ UNHCR (2017) Sudan Inter-Agency Operational Update: South Sudanese Refugee Response. 1-28 February 2017

government counterparts and NGO implement partners, including assisting them with preparation of UNHCR reports.

UNHCR's two INGO partners in WNS, ADRA and Plan, view part of their added value to build capacity of local partners. Capacity of national NGOs is reported to be lower in WNS than in other states and local partners often take on roles that do not require a high level of technical expertise such as hygiene promotion or assisting supervisors during construction activities.

Although UNHCR's response has mainly been nationally-led, UNHCR has not had a capacity building strategy and capacity needs assessments do not appear to be part of periodic partner reviews.

Adherence to relevant technical quality standards

When staff from UNHCR and implementing partners were asked "*which standard are you using, UNHCR or Sphere standards?*" during interviews, the usual response was "*both*". When asked about the difference between the two standards, the response was mostly along the lines that the standards are essentially the same, although UNHCR standards are sometimes a bit higher so we first aim for Sphere standard and then UNHCR's.³⁶ Two UNHCR staff who had been in Sudan for more than two years noted that it was only after South Sudanese had been recognised as refugees by GoS that UNHCR had been able to apply UNHCR's own standards. On the whole, it was apparent that **the majority of UNHCR and partner staff were unclear on how to contextualise and apply Sphere standards.**³⁷ One result of this approach has been to plan investments in infrastructure and services to meet numerical targets instead of providing assistance informed by an assessment of access and relative need in line with the contextualisation and AAP approaches promoted by Sphere.

In any event, as shown in the previous section, it is evident that assistance has consistently been below either standard in some sectors. Following a monitoring visit in 2016, representatives of three major donors addressed a letter June 2016 to the UNHCR Representative in Sudan expressing serious concerns about inadequate standards of assistance. The donors confirmed UNHCR's essential role in coordinating a timely response to evolving needs of refugee populations and urged UNHCR to take a number of actions to improve the quality of infrastructure such as latrines, harmonise standards, improve community-based approaches, decongest sites and reinforce technical UNHCR and partner capacities.³⁸

³⁶ Sphere standards have since evolved based on lessons learned and in the 2018 edition of Sphere there is increased emphasis on referring to the context when defining standards to ensure they are appropriate. The views expressed by UNHCR staff in Sudan during interviews would have been true for the Sphere Handbook 20 years ago – see http://www.parkdatabase.org/files/documents/2001_comparison_of_humanitarian_standards.pdf,

³⁷ See, for example, London School of Economics (2016) Placing global standards in local context.

³⁸ Donors also expressed concern in the letter about inadequate transparency and communication with donors, the lack of leadership, coordination and accountability between agencies resulting in sectoral gaps and the lack of clarity about strategic evolution for support to the caseload in WNS.

As described in the section above, UNHCR and their partners have managed to address some of these concerns, notably in terms of reinforcing technical capacities and in some sectors, such as water supply in some camps and nutritional status. Based on sectoral indicators other areas still require attention, notably sanitation, environmental impact, education, community participation and site improvement.

In addition to its sectoral standards **UNHCR has its own global registration system and standards and this has contributed to tensions with WFP due to differences in methodologies, frequency and data exchange compatibilities along with UNHCR's reluctance to share registration data with other agencies due to protection concerns.** A particular point of tension has been WFP's preference for monthly updated registration data to inform their distributions, but this is not the norm for UNHCR in Sudan or in other countries.

M&E and learning systems

An assessment by the evaluation team during the early stages of the evaluation found that monitoring, tracking systems, information management and data quality control systems have not been fit for purpose since the beginning of the operation, a finding that was subsequently validated during interviews. Partner reporting has largely been limited to activities and outputs and several discrepancies between reported results and observations, interviews and mission reports cast doubt on the quality of data. There was a limited amount of outcome data that was provided to the evaluation team by UNHCR and its implementing partners in the form of periodic mission reports and some of the partner narrative reports. As described above, **apart from NFI and shelter, PDM has been mainly *ad hoc*. UNHCR has a system to review programme implementation progress but the evaluation team did not find any evidence of UNHCR-led or partner lessons-learned reviews that could, for example, inform annual planning exercises.**

In a 2016 letter addressed to UNHCR Sudan, donors expressed concerns about what they felt was inadequate transparency and communication with donors. When carrying out an assessment of data availability during the inception phase, it was evident to the evaluation team that information management has been a constant challenge for UNHCR since the beginning of the response. OCHA offered to assist UNHCR with information management³⁹ but UNHCR chose instead to reinforce its own information management capacities. UNHCR recruited additional technical staff and allocated resources during 2017 to improve tracking and information management systems. UNHCR Sudan requested assistance from the UNHCR Regional Bureau to set up an information management system. According to a UNHCR key informant, this support has been limited so far to help with revising the dashboard.⁴⁰ UNHCR's Regional Bureau has recognised information management as a gap throughout the region and had plans to initiate roving information management systems support during 2018.

³⁹ OCHA helped UNHCR Sudan with mapping of the refugee operation and provided feedback on RCF documents.

⁴⁰ An example of dashboard can be seen at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/62603>

UNHCR Sudan subsequently made a commitment to donors to improve communications with donors, so it was understandable that their information management unit has been placed within the external relations unit and communication products have been mainly targeted at external stakeholders. **Donor representatives confirmed there had been a significant improvement in the quality of information provided by UNHCR.** Acting on requests from the RCF, UNHCR periodically modified population dashboards to include data the help improve operations planning by, for example, providing data on primary and secondary school-aged children. Overall, however, the team's assessment was that **UNHCR gave insufficient priority to continuous improvement and learning for field operations** through, for example, strengthening UNHCR's monitoring systems or supporting communications with refugees and host communities.

Remote management systems

Access to the camps was problematic in the beginning, particularly for international staff.⁴¹ After UNHCR staff began to get more regular access to refugee camps in WNS in late 2016, remote management became less of a priority. The lack of remote management systems did nevertheless continue to affect assistance and protection for PoCs staying in difficult-to-access areas.

Since HAC initially required UNHCR Sudan to only work through SRCS, UNHCR tried hiring two SRCS staff to supervise so that it could monitor UNHCR-funded interventions. Based on interviews with UNHCR staff and monitoring reports, this arrangement did not yield a good result. One example cited by a UNHCR interviewee was that refugees had to be relocated during the rainy season from flood-prone areas in Kilo 10 to three new sites since UNHCR's technical advice on site selection had not been followed.

After access improved in WNS, UNHCR Sudan felt that a remote monitoring system would still be beneficial to develop a tracking tool for PoCs who were staying in difficult-to-access areas in other states. According to a UNHCR interviewee, since **UNHCR staff in Sudan had no previous experience of remote management systems and did not receive any support by UNHCR in the region or from HQ**, the idea was abandoned. UNHCR chose not to follow the example of UNICEF, which hired a consultancy firm to undertake third party monitoring of their WASH and multi-sectoral interventions in WNS (Foncier 2016, Foncier 2017).

Staffing, logistical and financial resources

As described above, since UNHCR Sudan was not able to deploy international staff to WNS during the first phase of the crisis they were forced to rely primarily upon a small team of UNHCR national staff accommodated in the WFP office. UNHCR assistance was mostly

⁴¹ One example cited was of a staff member finally receiving a 7-day permit to visit WNS after several week's wait. When he arrived in Kosti, he was only allowed to travel to the camps during 2 days.

channelled via SRCS, which had been nominated by HAC as the primary conduit for delivering assistance in camps. There was relatively little NGO presence in WNS. Of all the international humanitarian agencies working in WNS, only MSF was able to successfully negotiate significant numbers of international staff to be based in WNS.

There was a consensus amongst UNHCR and external interviewees that **UNHCR suffered from a lack of capacity since the beginning of the crisis and this had influenced the efficiency and effectiveness of their response.** UNHCR initially relied heavily on UNICEF⁴² and WHO international technical specialists. UNHCR interviewees felt that these two agencies possessed good technical capacities and their existing links with GoS Ministries were useful, but they lacked experience of working in large-scale displacement emergencies. Interviewees from UNICEF and WHO saw their involvement in refugee operations to be mainly limited to providing support during the emergency phase since they lacked the resources and capacity for a longer-term engagement. Apart from implementing partners, most of whom also suffered from limited capacity, the other technical resources used by UNHCR were members of UNHCR's global ERT and standby partners such as the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).⁴³

ERT deployments often required 10 days to be spent in Khartoum to complete administrative arrangements and obtain travel permits, which is an average of 45-75 days between the request and starting work in WNS.⁴⁴

At the beginning of the crisis the only technical positions in UNHCR Sudan focusing on WNS were a site planner and a public health national officer based in Khartoum. By 2016, UNHCR had managed to increase its staff in WNS, including an international Head of Office, and the number of partners was increased to seven, including two international NGOs (INGOs). In 2017, UNHCR increased the number of implementing partners to eleven, including agreements with four state-level government agencies.

By the end of 2017, UNHCR had considerably expanded their technical capacity in Khartoum to include a public health officer, a nutrition/food security expert, a WASH specialist, an Education Officer, CBI Officer, Senior Livelihood Officer and a National Environmental Officer.

Some of the main effects of the lack of capacity and restrictions on movement included:

- Centralised decision-making in Khartoum UNHCR and partners which meant that field staff didn't have authority to make timely decisions;
- Delays in implementing critical interventions including registration, establishing basic services, approval and supervision of community infrastructure construction;

⁴² UNICEF has a large humanitarian operation covering 15 states in Sudan. UNICEF scaled up its activities and in WNS after the refugee influx to address unmet needs in child protection, education, health, nutrition and WASH, some of which was supported by UNICEF's own resources.

⁴³ Both SDC and MSB deployed WASH specialists who were seconded to UNHCR for extended periods.

⁴⁴ Source: UNHCR Sudan

- Lack of technical counterparts for UNICEF and WHO technical staff to provide an informed perspective on design and implementation of interventions in an emergency displacement context.

A gap mentioned by both UNHCR field staff and implementing partner interviewees was that **UNHCR Sudan has lacked a dedicated staff member to coordinate operations since the beginning of 2016**. This function reportedly provided a clear point of contact within UNHCR to obtain information or help get things done, and since this post has become vacant interviewees said they either addressed their messages to 3-4 staff or used personal contacts.

Based on interviews with and mission reports by partners, UNHCR staff from the region and HQ, **UNHCR investments in logistics has been adequate**. Logistics has mainly been limited by difficulties in getting GoS permits and, during the rainy season, poor road infrastructure. UNHCR also lacked their own storage space for the first two years, relying on spare space in WFP's warehouse. After UNHCR's access improved, the main limitations are road conditions during the rainy season and, during the first quarter of 2018, lack of fuel reduced mobility and increased costs.

As shown in Figure 4 above, **UNHCR has only been able to mobilise between 19 and 37 percent of their annual funding requirements** specified in the RRRPs during successive years. **UNHCR Sudan has been able to cover its own operations budget but has lacked resources to adequately cover unmet needs in sanitation, shelter and education**. It has also forced UNHCR to **deprioritise certain activities as livelihoods** (Figure 5) **and delayed implementation of, for example, relocation of refugees from overcrowded Alwaral camp to the new site**. UNHCR in Sudan is not alone in facing this problem. UNHCR offices in the region hosting large numbers of South Sudanese refugees have typically received only around a third of their requirements since the beginning of the crisis.⁴⁵

Considering UNHCR Sudan's Value for Money (VFM)

UNHCR's leadership role in coordination and operational support for the response to a major refugee crisis was widely recognised by interviewees. With limited funding and initial difficulties in accessing PoCs, UNHCR relied mainly on national staff and agencies which contributed to keeping death rates below emergency thresholds and mitigated suffering. UNHCR has also kept protection on the agenda, notably in advocating for the issuance of identity cards to refugees and for targeted assistance to vulnerable groups.

⁴⁵ UNHCR Funding updates for the South Sudan crisis for 2014-2017.

It proved difficult to assess UNHCR's comparative cost advantages.⁴⁶ **UNHCR has not been in a position to be able to monitor major cost drivers in WNS** since they only began disaggregating expenditures by operational area from 2018 onwards.⁴⁷ Only half of the UNHCR technical specialists interviewed in Khartoum were able to demonstrate a reasonable awareness about unit costs relating to their sector for different intervention options.

Low numbers of international staff compared to other countries in the region hosting significant numbers of South Sudanese refugees have substantially reduced costs since approximately 42% of donor contributions are allocated to UNHCR's own staffing and administrative costs. An additional 7% are absorbed by INGO partners for overhead costs plus an amount for salaries that varies according to the nature of intervention. The remaining amount is mainly used for infrastructure, service provision and delivery of assistance. **These relatively high operational costs put pressure on UNHCR and their partners to demonstrate VFM for South Sudanese refugees.**

UNHCR Sudan substantially increased the number of international staff in WNS during late 2017 and early 2018 with the expectation that additional investments could be justified through returns in the form of improved efficiency and effectiveness of interventions.

Areas where UNHCR could have contributed to improving VFM included:

- **Delays in updating/verifying refugee registration data** have affected the efficiency of the response.
- **Relatively low levels of participation and ownership by refugee and host communities in planning, constructing and maintaining community infrastructure.** As one example, a UNHCR implementing partner working in the WASH sector estimated that the cost of family latrines for the extension site could have been reduced by almost half if there was significant participation by refugees;
- A number of examples were cited by interviews and in monitoring reports of refugees **looting or damaging community infrastructure** such as water systems, batteries for solar lights, fences around schools. This was partly attributed to not adequately taking risks into account when designing interventions along with a lack of refugee ownership.
- **Increased use of outcome data from PDM or community/refugee complaints and feedback systems could have helped improve the effectiveness of the assistance provided.**

⁴⁶ As noted in the Methodology section, it was not possible to carry out a VFM or cost-effective analysis due to the limited scope, team profile, time constraints and lack of relevant data. Instead, the evaluation team used proxy indicators to assess VFM such as, for example, the extent that cost considerations were included in decision-making.

⁴⁷ A cost driver is the unit of an activity that causes the change in activity's cost.

- **Constraints on use of cash transfers** due to lack of experience with CBI and resistance by decision-makers. Reports of widespread selling of food items provided by WFP and NFI, proximity to the commercial centre of Kosti, experiences in other parts of Sudan along with findings from extensive global research,⁴⁸ the 2016 JAM and evaluations⁴⁹ highlighting the benefits of CBI indicate this is a viable option.
- **Selection of partners has been limited by GoS restrictions** on which partners UNHCR and its partners can work with. Initially, UNHCR was required to work through SRCS in WNS even though SRCS capacity was stretched by increasing numbers of new arrivals. By early 2018, flexibility of partner selection had improved but, as described below, was not as effective as it could have been.
- Although risk management and emergency preparedness is an integral part of UNHCR's strategy and way of working, **UNHCR and partners were not fully prepared for the large influx during 2017, which resulted in inefficiencies.**

Key external factors highlighted in reports and during interviews with UNHCR and implementing partners that significantly influenced VFM included:

- **High rates of inflation** in Sudan that increased transaction costs;
- **GoS requirements** that potentially influenced VFM/cost-effectiveness such as delays in issuing permits, limiting the range of partners that UNHCR and its INGO partners can work and requiring construction of costly permanent infrastructure; and
- **Limited access to livelihoods** that would lessen dependence of refugees on external assistance.

Key contributing or constraining factors influencing effectiveness

UNHCR Sudan has faced multiple challenges in responding to this crisis, notably the initial decision by GoS to designate South Sudanese as “brothers and sisters” rather than as refugees, leaving UNHCR’s role in the response unclear. Since then, UNHCR has been able to position itself take on a more central role in the response in accordance with its mandate. Contributing factors identified during interviewees and the desk review, which were subsequently validated during an interagency workshop in Sudan, include:

- Agreement to use UNHCR funds to invest in improving education, health and water infrastructure for host communities to promote peaceful co-existence;⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See, for example, Kiaby, Andreas (2017) Cash in conflict: cash programming in South Sudan and Doocy, S. and Tappis, H. (2016) Cash-based approaches in humanitarian emergencies: A systematic review. Systematic Review 28. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation.

⁴⁹ Brewin, M. *et al.* (2017) Operation Evaluation: Sudan Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 200808: Support for food security and nutrition for conflict-affected and chronically vulnerable populations (1st July 2015 – 30th June 2017)

⁵⁰ One of the outcomes of the first visit to Sudan of the UNHCR High Commissioner in October 2014.

- Development of a constructive relationship with local authorities in WNS, where UNHCR has sought to demonstrate its value added through its coordination and improved quality of interventions in camps and host communities;
- Successive visits by the UNHCR High Commissioner, the first one during October 2014 and the most recent in August 2017, have helped strengthen relationships with GoS; and
- The decision by the United States government to revoke selected long-standing economic sanctions against Sudan in October 2017 citing progress towards maintaining a cessation of hostilities in Sudanese conflict areas. While some sanctions remain, this has had the effect of significantly improving access by humanitarian agencies working in Sudan. UNHCR was amongst the humanitarian agencies that has benefited from improved access to refugees following the partial lifting of sanctions.

UNHCR and their partners faced a number of **constraints** during their response to the South Sudan crisis, especially during the first three years of the crisis. Some of these constraints were specific to Sudan, others were shared with other countries in the region that were also hosting South Sudanese refugees. The main ones are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Constraining factors influencing effectiveness of the response

Category	Constraining factors
Shared with other countries hosting South Sudanese refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees arriving in poor physical condition from 2015 onwards; • Pressure by governments to build permanent infrastructure rather than invest in temporary infrastructure; and • Funding constraints due to gaps between requirements in the RRRP and contributions from donors. • Availability of suitable land to accommodate the continuing influx of South Sudanese. Had to relocate camps due to flooding, latrines fill within a month due to soil composition. • Pressure by government counterparts to encourage refugees to stay in camps in WNS⁵¹ that is at odds with UNHCR Sudan’s promotion of alternative-to-camps and urban policies. • Funding shortfalls that are amplified due to host government resistance to temporary community structures such as schools, requiring permanent structures instead.⁵²

⁵¹ Similar pressure can also be seen in Ethiopia and Kenya.

⁵² As shown in Figure 4, contributions amounted to 19–34% of annual requirements during 2014-2017. Other countries in the region faced similar gaps with some, such as the Central African Republic, experiencing even larger funding gaps. Ethiopia and Uganda are other countries that apply pressure on humanitarian agencies to construct permanent infrastructure in refugee settlement areas.

Category	Constraining factors
Sudan-specific (external)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic situation in Sudan (sanctions, high inflation, fuel shortages, etc.). • Physical access to PoC (government permits, impassable roads during the rainy season). • Refugees are settled on land that is privately-owned. • Very limited presence of international or national humanitarian agencies prior to the crisis. All assistance had to initially be channeled via SRCS. • Limited capacities of national actors in WNS. • Competition between different GoS agencies for UNHCR resources that causes various inefficiencies such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approval authority for UNHCR’s INGO partners (license, visas, etc.) lies with HAC, not with COR, UNHCR’s GoS counterpart; ○ Contractors cancelling contracts and other obstacles to implementation due to delays in signing PPAs.
Sudan-specific (UNHCR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR not present in WNS prior to crisis. • Initial lack of awareness at state level regarding UNHCR's protection role. Confidential interviews by staff, whether national or international, with PoC were not allowed. • UNHCR’s lack of access to refugee populations during the first two years of the response adversely affected their ability to raise funds⁵³ or do household surveys of the refugee population to acquire an in-depth understanding of capacities and needs. • Gaps in UNHCR staffing, particularly up until 2017. • UNHCR did not have a clear official role until 2016 when South Sudanese were recognised as refugees by GoS. • When South Sudanese fleeing the conflict were designated as “brothers and sisters”, UNHCR Sudan found itself in unfamiliar territory with restricted operating space. One of the innovative tools they applied was the newly-developed Refugee Coordination Model. While there were some positive results, UNHCR’s expectations about what UN strategic partners implementing interventions in different sectors proved to be unrealistic.⁵⁴

⁵³ ECHO, for example, did not provide any funding to UNHCR until they were able to have regular access to refugees.

⁵⁴ A review of CERF-funded interventions during the South Sudan crisis (Baker 2015) recommended that UNHCR capture lessons learned from UNHCR Sudan’s experience, but the team found was no evidence that lessons had been captured.

Category	Constraining factors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant delays in registration refugees and maintaining updated data. • UNHCR decision-making centralized in Khartoum. • Lack of a robust remote monitoring system.

From late 2016, UNHCR saw a significant improvement in its operating environment. Prior to this, UNHCR experienced significant difficulties in obtaining permits for vehicles or international staff to visit WNS. UNHCR Sudan deployed a few national staff members to Kosti by public transport. UNHCR initially relied largely on support from WFP, which already had an existing office and warehouse. UNHCR ran their operations for the next two years with a relatively small team of national staff with only occasional short missions by international staff. As indicators of the marked improvement in access, the evaluation team was able to obtain permits without any difficulties and at the same time UNHCR Sudan was in the process of significantly increasing the number of international staff based in WNS, including a P5 Head of Sub-Office.

EQ 3: UNHCR’s Refugee Response Coordination Responsibilities

EQ 3	<i>How well has UNHCR exercised its refugee response coordination responsibilities?</i>
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This evaluation question looks at effectiveness of UNHCR’s coordination role in the refugee response in terms of complementarity, addressing needs and capacity gaps and harmonising standards.

Summary response to EQ 3.

- UNHCR regularly participated in the HCT but there was a broad consensus amongst interviewees that UNHCR had not consistently demonstrated teamwork and leadership expected of a major humanitarian agency.
- UNHCR was praised for its teamwork by peer HCT members for its coordination role in Sudan for CERF funding processes during 2014. The subsequent deterioration in team work with HCT peers was mainly attributed to a combination of UN strategic partners not delivering according to expectations along with UNHCR’s increased technical capacities. These capacities made them less dependent on capacities of strategic partners but have meant that there is less of a development perspective in UNHCR’s programming.
- Up until September 2016, the government’s response was led by HAC, not COR, who was historically UNHCR’s main counterpart in Sudan. This imposed constraints on UNHCR, notably in terms of the ability to promote protection in accordance with their mandate and carry out the selection of partners in accordance with their SOP.
- UNHCR’s coordination systems were viewed as relatively inefficient until the RCF/RWG was launched in 2016 and has helped to improve UNHCR’s image in WNS. The RCF was the best example of a UNHCR feedback system that evaluation team observed and

UNHCR's Regional Bureau has showcased the RCF in Sudan as a good practice model that other countries in the region could replicate.

- Development actors such as UNDP and UNHABIT have been invited to the RCF but have yet to participate even though they are funding refugee-related interventions in refugee hosting areas.
- Key challenges faced by UNHCR in harmonising approaches include the lack of alignment between UNHCR's standards that aim to meet basic protection and assistance needs using participatory approaches and GoS requirements to invest in relatively costly contractor-driven permanent infrastructure. Another key challenge is the lack of a common approach by UNHCR and WFP to refugee registration and verification.

UNHCR's role in promoting synergies

According to UNHCR's global policy,⁵⁵ as a member of the HCT UNHCR has acknowledged the leadership and coordinating role of the Humanitarian Coordinator. However, UNHCR has stressed that their responsibilities in matters that fall directly within its mandate cannot be devolved to a common coordination structure and UNHCR has a responsibility to speak out and act with respect to international refugee protection.

UNHCR regularly participated in the HCT as one of the primary UN humanitarian agencies in Sudan. However, there was a broad consensus amongst interviewees that UNHCR had not always demonstrated teamwork and leadership expected of a major humanitarian agency. Donors expressed similar concern in their June 2016 letter about UNHCR's lack of leadership, coordination and accountability between agencies that resulted in sectoral gaps in WNS. This was also evident in the processes associated with signing MoUs with WFP and UNICEF, processes which were reportedly charged with tension and negotiations that extended over several months. There were many factors, including budget implications, which increased the length of negotiations process and was viewed as a cumbersome way of compensating for the lack of teamwork.

UNHCR Sudan took on a lead role within the HCT when coordinating CERF proposals for the South Sudanese crisis in 2015. A review of CERF support to the South Sudanese crisis found that feedback from peer HCT member agencies interviewed regarding UNHCR's lead role was overwhelmingly positive.⁵⁶ One of the main conclusions of the review was that CERF had been a useful tool in strengthening teamwork within the HCT while at the same time demonstrating the value added of the Refugee Coordination Model

⁵⁵ UNHCR Emergency Handbook: International coordination architecture – accessed 18 May 2018

⁵⁶ Baker, J. (2015) Independent Review of the Value Added of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in the Countries Affected by the South Sudan Crisis: Regional Synthesis Report

in complementing OCHA Sudan's role in coordinating assistance for IDPs and natural disasters working together as a team.

Findings in this evaluation indicate that **the subsequent deterioration in team work can mainly be attributed to a combination of factors. Firstly, UN strategic partners did not deliver according to each other's expectations**⁵⁷ and, unlike with their implementing partners, these strategic relationships do not allow them to hold each other accountable.⁵⁸ Another factor was that, **as UNHCR acquired more technical capacity, they became less dependent on the technical capacities of their strategic partners and reverted to their independent implementation model.**

Up until September 2016, the government's response was led by HAC, not COR, who was historically UNHCR's main counterpart in Sudan. UNHCR did not have a strong prior working relationship with HAC and UNHCR's role in assisting South Sudanese asylum-seekers was initially unclear. Once COR assumed a lead role, coordination with GoS was facilitated, at least at a national level. COR only established a presence in WNS in April 2017 and proceeded to take over SRCS' camp management role and helped to facilitate UNHCR field operations, including **helping UNHCR to put themselves in a position where they could fulfil their protection mandate more effectively.**

Identifying and addressing partner capacity gaps and needs

During the early phase of the response, it was reported that HAC selected partners for INGOs to work with or provided a list of two or three local NGOs to choose from. This meant that INGOs who had long-term working relationships with local partners in other states were not allowed to bring them to WNS. Interviews with staff from UNHCR, INGOs, SRCS and local agencies, acknowledged that local agencies had difficulty in coping with an influx of such a scale. During the first years of the operation, despite the lack of access, reports and interviews with UNHCR staff confirmed that, although UNHCR was aware of capacity gaps, potential solutions were limited by GoS requirement that all humanitarian assistance be channelled through SRCS.

UNHCR was eventually able to carry out a selection of partners in accordance with their implementing partner selection procedures during early 2018. Interviews with key informants from UNHCR, GoS and NGOs indicated that the processes partner selection process lacked transparency. One result was a delay in signing tripartite partnership agreements by COR, who felt that they should have been consulted during the process rather than approve after the selection had already been finalised. Some key informants felt that some of the partners that had been selected lacked the necessary capacity to address gaps based on their past performance. They felt that UNHCR Sudan could have been more proactive in encouraging NGOs who were likely to be able to address specific gaps to submit an expression of interest. Included in this category were international NGOs who could

⁵⁷ For example, UN agencies, particularly WFP, were frustrated by UNHCR's delays with registration. Some UNHCR staff expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and cost of some of UNICEF's WASH infrastructure and with WHO's lack of operational capacity. UNICEF and WHO in turn felt that their advice was not always being respected and that lack of funding was a significant obstacle to meeting standards.

⁵⁸ UNHCR was being criticised by its donors of for low quality and standards.

help in building capacities of local organisations and contribute their own funding raised from other donors.

As described above, UNHCR Sudan did not have a specific capacity building strategy that could have helped in filling identified capacity gaps in partners. This strategy could have helped UNHCR staff to fill their coordination roles more effectively since several key informants from NGO partners mentioned the variation in quality of between the different UNHCR groups, with many citing OCHA-led groups as good-practice examples.

UNHCR's strategic partnerships with UNICEF and WHO, when UNHCR had limited access to PoC and lacked technical capacity and access, had mixed results. It was clear from interviews with staff not only with concerned UN agencies, but also partners working in those sectors that the collaboration with UNHCR had ended leaving many dissatisfied with the results. Based on interviews with staff from UNHCR and UNICEF, negotiations on the handover MoU lasted more than a year and, in the end, the two Representatives had to meet since technical teams couldn't agree. The evaluation team viewed this as an indicator of differing expectations and lack of a pre-agreed exit strategy due partly to the relative lack of UNHCR technical capacity during the initial phase of the response.

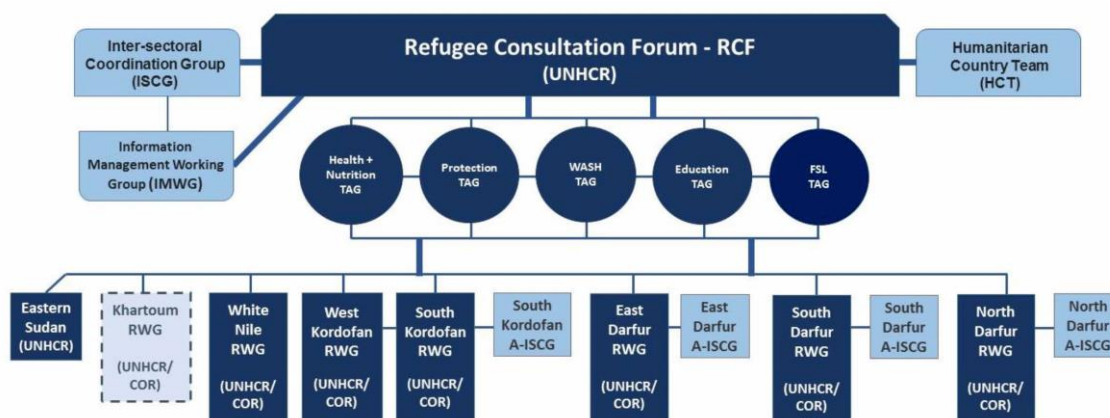
The Refugee Consultation Forum

Interviewees from all stakeholder groups who had been involved during the initial response agreed that **UNHCR's coordination systems were felt to be relatively inefficient until the Refugee Multi-Sector Group (RMS), which later changed its name to the Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF), was launched in 2016.** Initially launched in Khartoum, a Refugee Working Group (RWG) was established in Kosti to engage state-level stakeholders.

Based on interviews with staff from GoS, NGOs and other UN agencies, **the RWG has helped to improve UNHCR's image in WNS.**⁵⁹ The establishment of technical working groups after UNHCR technical staff were recruited was also perceived as added value since one of the main criticisms of the previous system was that meetings were too long in part because discussions ranged from strategic issues to sector-specific technical problems, which had often already been discussed in cluster meetings in Khartoum. UNHCR's experience with coordination of operations in WNS put them in a good position to apply lessons learned as their operations extended to other states as shown in Figure 7 below.

⁵⁹ Riots at the largest camp in WNS, Alwaral camp, in August 2017 had the effect of turning much of the local population against refugees, led to government counterparts proposing additional restrictions on movement and employment of refugees and had a negative impact coordination between UNHCR and government agencies. By the time the evaluation team arrived in April 2018, GoS staff were actively participating in the RWG and TAGs.

Figure 8 – Refugee Coordination in Sudan



Source: UNHCR (as of November 2017)

The RCF was the best example of a UNHCR feedback system that the evaluation team observed and UNHCR’s Regional Bureau has highlighted the RCF in Sudan as a good practice model that other countries in the region could replicate. Many interviewees who had participated in RCF discussions cited UNHCR’s willingness to listen, including to complaints about UNHCR. UNHCR conducted a survey⁶⁰ during 2017 with RCF, RWG and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members to gather feedback on how to improve the effectiveness of the mechanisms. UNHCR received over 500 responses from UN agencies, GoS, INGO and national NGOs.⁶¹ An action plan was subsequently developed in consultation with partners and UNHCR was planning to have a follow up survey in mid-2018 to assess progress. There were three main conclusions from the 2017 survey:

- Dedicated coordination of the refugee response is considered important by most actors in Sudan requiring dedicated discussions separate from humanitarian response planning for IDPs/resident populations;
- RCF members are open to donor participation in RCF meetings on an occasional or quarterly basis;
- While the majority of respondents expressed overall satisfaction with the RCF, areas for improvement included increased coverage of gaps analysis, strategy development,

⁶⁰ UNHCR (2017a) South Sudanese Refugee Response Coordination in Sudan: Assessment Survey Findings and Recommendations

⁶¹ Response rates were roughly evenly distributed between the stakeholder groups, except for GoS, which had a very low response rate.

advocacy coordination, capacity building and effective information dissemination is needed across all forums.

These conclusions were consistent with findings by the evaluation team. There were three additional issues that were raised during interviews that did not appear in the survey results:

- One suggestion heard from several NGO interviewees in WNS is that UNHCR should use approaches similar to OCHA-led coordination to increase effectiveness and efficiency.⁶²
- The second issue, raised by national partners of international NGOs, noted that, although they were invited to participate in the RWG and TAGs in WNS, they were not involved in the RCF in Khartoum.
- **Development actors such as UNDP and UNHABIT have been invited to the RCF but have yet to participate even though they are funding refugee-related interventions in refugee hosting areas.**

RCF role in harmonising approaches and agreeing on standards

Interviewees who had been in Sudan at the onset of the crisis noted that **there had initially been questions from humanitarian agencies about the value added of having a separate Refugee Multi Sector coordination mechanism.** As noted above, these questions looked to be valid when UNHCR first initiated refugee coordination. Interviewees who had participated in those initial meetings spoke of wide-ranging agendas and duplicated discussions in clusters. Needs in the South Sudanese refugee crisis continued to grow and UNHCR stepped in to play a constructive role in leading the CERF funding submission for UN agencies involved in the crisis, which validated the need for a refugee-focused mechanism.

The confusion between Sphere and UNHCR Standards was described above under EQ2. Since these are both global standards, UNHCR Sudan cannot be expected to resolve this issue by itself.⁶³ This issue was in any case found to be much less important than the **lack of alignment between UNHCR's standards that aim to meet basic protection and assistance needs using participatory approaches and the GoS requirements to invest in relatively costly contractor-driven permanent infrastructure.** A review of technical monitoring reports and interviews with donor representatives and technical staff from UN agencies and NGOs indicated that there is little opposition to permanent infrastructure, but these investments should not contribute to a degradation in the humanitarian condition.

A related area of tension has been about the **standards and choice of design for water systems** installed by UNICEF. An independent technical assessment of the water systems was beyond the scope of this evaluation, but rather relied on analysis of lessons learned by technical staff. According to UNICEF, and some UNHCR, key informants, the systems put

⁶² Suggestions included improved meeting preparation and facilitation and facilitators presenting a synthesis of member updates highlighting key issues rather than each member giving their own update.

⁶³ It could be mitigated by encouraging UNHCR staff to update their knowledge of the most recent Sphere standards.

in place were the best options for the WNS context. Other UNHCR staff felt that the systems were too expensive to construct and maintain. These differences of opinion proved to be a major sticking point during the drawn-out negotiations over the MoU between UNICEF and UNHCR.

Another critical area that arose during interviews and desk research is the lack of a common approach by UNHCR and WFP to refugee registration and verification, which has not been helped by different registration standards and systems at a global level.⁶⁴ An illustrative example of this tension occurred at the end of 2017 when WFP decided they not wait for UNHCR to conduct an already-delayed verification exercise, which they eventually carried out in April-May 2018. Based on interviews with WFP and UNHCR and refugee FDG, WFP organised their own verification exercise⁶⁵ despite advice from UNHCR and refugees themselves that the timing was not optimal.⁶⁶ Evidence from other countries indicate that the systems can be made to work together even while facing similar challenges. In South Sudan, WFP signed a data-sharing agreement with UNHCR planned to test for inter-operability in 2017.⁶⁷

Other areas where harmonization has been challenging have already been described under EQ1 relating to the lack of alignment between UNHCR planning instruments (RRRP) and those used by the other HCT members (multi-year strategy) in addition to the multi-year strategies of GoS agencies, donors, other UN agencies and many NGO partners.

EQ 4: Consideration of Medium- and Long-term Objectives

EQ 4	<i>To what extent have medium and longer-term objectives and solutions been given due consideration in planning and decision-making processes?</i>
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This evaluation question looks at how **medium and longer-term considerations** were prioritised and guided capacity building, strategy and implementation. It also looks at the key contributing and constraining factors relating to UNHCR's 'Alternative to Camps' policy and livelihoods strategy.

⁶⁴ UNHCR experienced comparable challenges in alignment with IOM registration systems in the Kordofan and Darfur states up until 2017 when UNHCR took over responsibility for registration. IOM's registration system was based on household level registration and numbers significantly decreased after UNHCR had completed biometric registration, which in some cases resulted in a 50% reduction in numbers.

⁶⁵ WFP Sudan Country Brief. November 2017.

⁶⁶ The timing for the verification overlapped with a seasonal migration to do the harvest, which for much of the refugee population, is their main source of income. In the end refugees in only 3 out of 8 camps agreed to participate.

⁶⁷ WFP (2017) Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report of South Sudan Country Portfolio (2011–2016)

Summary response to EQ 4.

- UNHCR standards have been mainly designed for protracted refugee crises and they have informed site planning for camps and related infrastructure in WNS.
- UNHCR's programme supported several medium- to long-term objectives in a number of ways, including formalising agreements with state-level line ministries, advocacy with donors to support livelihood interventions, piloting durable solutions to refugee settlement, registration/legitimation of the refugee population, investments in permanent community infrastructure.
- Areas for improvement relating to this EQ identified included the lack of a multi-year strategy specifically for UNHCR's programme, an accompanying strategy for building national capacities, more sustainable exit strategies that promote ownership of refugee and host communities and site planning that is area-based, rather than camp-focused.
- Interviews with different UN agencies and donors indicated general agreement with the out-of-camp solution. Donors nevertheless expressed reservations about UNHCR's lack of a long-term strategic view.

Consideration of medium and longer-term factors

UNHCR standards have been mainly designed for protracted refugee crises and, based on a review of design-related documents, site observations and interviews with refugee FGD and staff from UNHCR and NGO partners, these standards have informed site planning for camps and related infrastructure in WNS. Other components of UNHCR's programme that were found to reflect medium- to long-term objectives include:

- **Partnership agreements signed with state-level government agencies** which promoted ownership of completed infrastructure and formed the basis for an exit strategy;
- **Use of results of UNHCR's livelihood assessment to successfully advocate with DFID to support livelihood activities**, without funds needing to pass through UNHCR which would put additional pressure on their capacity;
- **Piloting durable solutions.** As noted above, the shelters and family latrine option currently being piloted may not prove to be feasible. However, the evaluation team noted that this initiative has catalysed a discussion about more cost-effective options, including promoting participation by refugees.
- **Prioritisation of registration and legitimisation of the refugee population** while advocating for continuation of the four freedoms.
- **Investment in permanent community infrastructure** (water, school buildings, health centres).

Areas for improvement identified from document research and interviews with different stakeholder groups:

- **Lack of an overall UNHCR multi-year strategy**, which was examined under EQ1. One of the concerns that donors expressed in their June 2016 letter was the lack of clarity about strategic evolution for support to refugees in WNS.
- **Lack of a UNHCR capacity building strategy targeted at national capacities**, which was examined under EQ2
- **Handovers are to GoS agencies where neither the host community or refugee leadership is involved.** Cases were reported of health centres and schools in host communities not operating due lack of a budget to cover running costs, a situation that is aggravated since most services are provided free of charge without any cost recovery, which does not conform to GoS policy. Health workers in MSF clinics in the camps reported that in early 2018, 40% of their outpatients were from host communities, some even coming from Kosti to benefit from free health care.
- Based on interviews with UNHCR senior management, **exit strategies will rely mainly on handover to government line ministries.** As cautioned in a recent multi-country study of exit strategies, that overreliance on government capacities can compromise sustainability.⁶⁸

“We need to think about long-term consequences and recognize the possibilities of camps becoming a permanent settlement” ... “we were building camps: storage facilities for people. But the refugees were building a city...”⁶⁹

- **Site planning has used a refugee camp approach instead of advocating for a semi-urban area-based approach.**⁷⁰ From a site planning perspective, this has translated into a focus on the camps so that, for example, there were no plans for any WASH facilities in the area allocated for the market. From a livelihoods perspective, following the influx of more than 150,000 refugees the area was transformed from a sparsely-populated rural economy into a semi-urban environment with a thriving commerce. In such an environment, agriculture- and (especially) fisheries-based opportunities livelihoods will be limited and increasingly become a source of conflict with host populations. On the other hand, the urban context opens up many more livelihood options.⁷¹

⁶⁸ “Linkages to government entities were only as effective as the government’s own ability and commitment to support associated activities.” Extracted from Rogers, B. L. and Coates, J. (2015) Sustaining Development: A Synthesis of Results from a Four-Country Study of Sustainability and Exit Strategies among Development Food Assistance Projects. (page 28)

⁶⁹ Quotes from experts in Jacobs, K. (2017) What’s Next? Rethinking the Refugee Camp

⁷⁰ This approach is comparable to that recommended in UNHCR’s 2017 Out of Camp Discussion Paper “Partners should consider national and local development planning in targeted areas and the potential for alignment, as well as the national and local economy and the opportunities for refugees to become self-reliant, build sustainable livelihoods and contribute to the community. In this sense a “humanitarian-development nexus” (page 5)

⁷¹ Betts, A., Bloom L., Kaplan, J., and Omata, N. (2014) Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions. Special economic zones have been piloted in Ethiopia – “[Refugee crisis: Plan to create 100,000 jobs in Ethiopia](#)” BBC News – 21 September 2016.

4.2 UNHCR ‘Alternative to Camps’ policy and livelihoods

Open borders for asylum-seekers and reasonable freedom of movement for South Sudanese refugees once in Sudan have been conducive to self-sufficiency and local integration of durable solutions. As of the end of 2017, UNHCR reported 78 percent of South Sudanese refugees were being hosted in an out-of-camp context. UNHCR staff in WNS reported that some asylum seekers have passed through reception facilities without being registered and ended up in camps. Cases were also reported of South Sudanese living in urban areas trying to register in the camps to benefit from assistance. Interviewees from UNHCR who had been present at the start of the crisis said that initially GoS sought to relocate South Sudanese asylum-seekers to areas where they could find employment, mainly in Darfur and Kordofan. Many did relocate, and there was an implicit assumption that many of those left in camps were likely to belong to vulnerable groups in need of assistance. As the influx continued and the population grew, the state government in WNS began to promote the concept of restricting employment and controlling movements using camp-based solutions. The riot in Alwaral in August 2017 sparked debates which were circulated and which restarted again when COR circulated a concept note in April 2018 for camp-based solutions in WNS modelled on the refugee camps in east Sudan.

GoS remained reluctant to opening a dialogue regarding the large population⁷² of refugees in Khartoum since they have not considered the capital as a place where refugees should receive assistance. COR key informants confirmed that some state governments have stated that they do not wish South Sudanese refugees to settle in their states.

In view of lessons learned from refugee camps in eastern Sudan where a dependency syndrome has been created over the course of several decades, UNHCR Sudan’s advocacy for out of camp settlement was viewed as an appropriate alternative. **Interviews with different UN agencies and donors indicated general agreement with the out-of-camp solution. Donors, however, expressed reservations about UNHCR’s lack of a long-term strategic view to support this strategy.** One donor cited UNHCR’s approach for out of camp populations in western Sudan which resembled standard humanitarian assistance which seemed ill-suited to the context.

EQ 5: Protection and Assistance for Persons of Concern

EQ 5

To what extent have UNHCR-led protection and assistance interventions been able to reach Persons of Concern?

This evaluation question looks the extent that the refugee response been accountable to affected people, the implementation of UNHCR Sudan’s AGD and participatory assessments and assessment of coverage and gaps in terms of ethnicity, location, persons with special needs, gender or age group.

⁷² See Figure 3 and accompanying narrative.

Summary response to EQ 5.

- UNHCR made progress in identifying vulnerable groups and individuals amongst the PoCs. Leaders in both refugee camps and host communities were used to regularly interacting with staff from UNHCR and partners, as were refugee women and youth groups. However, it was evident that women from the host communities were not accustomed to meet with agencies.
- Despite these regular discussions, findings from FGDs indicated basic levels of AAP. Refugee and host community members displayed little knowledge of plans, specification or budgets of interventions and demonstrated little responsibility for monitoring implementation of maintenance and were constrained in giving feedback.
- A qualitative assessment by the team based on the 10 AGD obligatory core actions found that good progress was made for commitments relating to AGD-inclusive programming data and the registration and legitimisation of vulnerable groups in camps. The main area for improvement related to participation and inclusion.
- As access by UNHCR and their partners to PoC in WNS has improved since 2016, UNHCR has been able to improve their understanding of the profile of refugees in camps, including persons with specific needs. Since 2017 UNHCR has used SOPs that included eligibility criteria for persons with specific needs to prioritise distribution of NFIs and temporary shelter materials. UNHCR had only begun to look at specific needs in out of camp populations.
- There have been significant problems with coverage and the quality of assistance provided by UNHCR's NGO partner tasked since 2014 to provide community services, with focus on protection of persons with specific needs using a community-based approach.

Accountability to affected people (AAP)

The evaluation team's assessment was that **UNHCR had made progress in identifying vulnerable groups and individuals amongst the PoCs but there were gaps in provision of appropriate assistance, notably in terms of community mobilisation and feedback on assistance provided.** Based on the FGDs that the evaluation team had with different groups in the camps and host communities, it was evident that the leaders in both refugee camps and host communities were regularly interacting with UNHCR and partner staff, as were refugee women's groups and youth groups. Conversely, it was evident that **women from the host community were not accustomed to meeting with agencies.** The evaluation team requested to meet with women from host communities near three camps, but in the end only met with one group and the women in that group claimed that it was the first time that UNHCR has invited them for a discussion.

A rapid assessment tool was used to guide discussions with fourteen FGDs, nine with refugees in camps and six with nearby host communities,⁷³ in order to provide a qualitative assessment of their relationship with agencies and their partners using indicators for information-sharing, participation and complaints/feedback. As shown in Annex 7, most agencies were seen as falling into the “Basic” category, although responses by some committee members in refugee camps and host communities indicated they were in the “Intermediate” category.

Overall, **findings from these FGDs indicated low levels of AAP. Refugee and host community members displayed little knowledge of plans, specification or budgets of interventions and demonstrated little responsibility for monitoring implementation of maintenance.** Of the 14 FGD, only during one were FGD members able to provide a reasonably accurate description of UNHCR’s role and responsibilities. When refugee committee members were asked to describe their role, all three responded that their main role was primarily to pass messages between agencies and the refugees. A notable exception was the “5 plus 5” committees described under EQ2. Consisting of five refugee representatives and five representatives from the host community, these committees were perceived as playing a useful conflict resolution role. The results of these FGDs were then cross-checked with staff from UNHCR and partners working in WNS during interviews and an interagency workshop where they were largely validated. The approach adopted during the AGD assessment that focused on refugees needs instead of also considering capacities was an additional example of low AAP.

AGD and participatory assessments

UNHCR introduced participatory methodologies over a decade ago to promote the role of women, men, girls, and boys of all ages and backgrounds as agents of change in their families and communities.⁷⁴ UNHCR’s global policy on AGD describes a set of 10 obligatory core actions that should to be undertaken by UNHCR offices. Performance ratings by the evaluation team have been given for each core action in the Table 4 below, based on available evidence from key informant interviews, FGD and reference documents. The team found that **reasonable progress had been made for commitments relating to AGD-inclusive programming data and the registration and legitimisation of vulnerable groups in camps. The main area for improvement related to participation and inclusion.**

⁷³ The 14 FGDs included 3 refugee camp committees, 3 refugee women groups, 2 mixed boy/girl refugee youth groups, 1 FGD composed of disabled refugees, 3 host community leaders, 2 women FGD from host communities.

⁷⁴ UNHCR (2018) Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity. UNHCR/HCP/2018/1

Table 5 – Progress on UNHCR’s obligatory core actions for AGD ⁷⁵

Area of Engagement & Core Action	Rating ⁷⁶	Basis for the Rating
1. AGD-Inclusive Programming data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and other diversity considerations.	2	Following the first bio-metric exercise during 2016, UNHCR Sudan had a reasonable understanding of the composition of the refugee populations registered in the camp. UNHCR has been trying to update the registration of camp and non-camp populations but have been hindered by various factors so lacks a comprehensive understanding of the refugee population in Sudan.
2. Participation and Inclusion	0	Interventions have been contractor-driven with little participation from refugees or host communities. Refugee involvement in maintenance activities is almost exclusively on a cash incentive basis and ownership of completed interventions is low. Improvements in the operating context and increased capacity should allow UNHCR to make progress on this core action during 2018.
3. Communication and Transparency	1	Communication and transparency have been hindered by lack of access. Access improved markedly during 2017, but communications tend to be top down and refugees and host communities lack clarity about agency roles and do not have access to project plans or budgets.
4. Feedback and Response	1	There are regular meetings with refugees and host communities when problems are discussed, but the authorities have yet to grant UNHCR permission to establish a complaints and feedback system that is risk-free. No feedback on how complaints have been addressed.
5. Organizational Learning and Adaptation	1	UNHCR has recently made progress on this core action, including carrying out a participatory review during 2017 jointly with the government.
6. Advancing Gender Equality:		<i>See below for ratings of specific components relating to gender equality.</i>

⁷⁵ Based on the minimum set of core actions in UNHCR’s Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity (UNHCR/HCP/2018/1).

⁷⁶ Rating system description: 0 = no evidence of core action, 1 = limited evidence of core action, 2 = reasonable progress for this core action, 3 = core actions have successfully addressed this area of engagement.

Area of Engagement & Core Action	Rating ⁷⁶	Basis for the Rating
a. Women and girls participate in all decision-making	1	UNHCR has promoted women’s participation in refugee camp committees, although not all committees have 50% representation. Outside of camps, including in host populations, UNHCR deals mainly with men.
b. Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation.	2	UNHCR Sudan’s advocacy and systems have been in accordance with this core action. The challenges have mainly been faced with the inclusion of out-of-camp populations.
c. Women and girls have equal access to and control over management and provision of relief items.	1	UNHCR Sudan and their partners have made efforts to promote equal access by women amongst the refugee population in camps. However, there has been little effort to promote access by out-of-camp populations or access by women in host communities.
d. Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, including decent work and quality education and health services.	1	UNHCR has been advocating for equal access for women and girls who are registered in camps. Main challenges relate to women and girls staying outside camps and obstacles shared with men regarding access to “decent” work and a reasonable standard of education.
e. Women and girls have access to comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services.	1	UNHCR Sudan has been challenged with this core action due to a combination of GoS sensitivities surrounding SGBV and lack of access, notably difficulties in setting up monitoring systems and conducting confidential interviews. There have been improvements in 2018 thanks to reinforcement of protection capacities and improved access.

Coverage for ethnicity, location, gender or age groups

As access by UNHCR and their partners to PoC in WNS has improved since 2016, UNHCR has been able to improve its understanding of the profile of refugees in the camps, including persons with specific needs. The biometric registration in 2016 helped with a preliminary identification of vulnerable individuals and the registration process included identification of persons with special needs. The AGD participatory assessment

conducted in 2017 included FGD with representatives of vulnerable groups. UNICEF led an assessment for refugees in WNS staying outside camps at the end of 2017.⁷⁷

As of April 2018, only persons with specific needs in reception centres or in camps was eligible to receive assistance although **UNHCR has been exploring ways of reaching PoC outside camps. In 2017 UNHCR finalised SOPs for the distribution of NFIs and temporary shelter materials which included eligibility criteria for pregnant and lactating women, elderly at risk, persons with a serious medical condition, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied children, women at risk/since parent, person at risk due to insecurity, vulnerable host community and disaster-affected refugees.** Review of monitoring data and discussions with refugee FGD indicated that the system is functioning. However, observations by the evaluation team during site visits and analysis of shelter status (Figure 6) indicated that distribution of shelter materials will need to be done prior to the rainy season.

An NGO has been partnering continuously with UNHCR since February 2014 to provide community services, with focus on protection of persons with specific needs using a community-based approach. A review of project reports and discussions with refugee FGD, including a FGD of persons with disabilities in one camp, indicated **there had been significant problems with coverage and the quality of assistance provided by this NGO partner.** Rapid participatory assessment results similarly indicated that community mobilisation objectives were not being achieved (see Table 4 above).

GoS has opted to separate the two main ethnic groups, Nuer and Shilluk, into different camps. UNHCR reported occasionally receiving asylum seekers from the Dinka ethnic group that cross into WNS. Most of these individuals are relocated to Dinka settlements in other parts of Sudan for protection reasons although some Dinka women married to Nuer or Shilluk men were reported to be living in the camps.

UNHCR interviewees who were present during 2015 recalled debates regarding the language of education. Refugees initially resisted following Sudanese curriculum, preferring teaching in English. Following negotiations, it was agreed that, South Sudanese Refugee children in WNS camps would adopt a hybrid approach, i.e. all children in Grades 1 – 5 would study in Arabic language while those in Grades 6 – 8 would study in English.

⁷⁷ The assessment identified over 8,000 unaccompanied and separated children and over 4,000 female-headed households, although there were questions whether these were all refugees due to the high number.

Conclusions

This chapter presents conclusions emerging from findings and analysis of this evaluation. They are structured as follows:

- An overall statement for UNHCR’s response to the South Sudanese refugee influx into Sudan;
- Ten conclusions linked to corresponding recommendations based on an analysis of evidence collected during the course of answering evaluation questions.

As described in the Methodology section, most of the conclusions below were presented in summary form during an interagency workshop and debriefing sessions with UNHCR staff. These conclusions have considered feedback received during these interactive sessions.

Overall statement: UNHCR’s response to the S. Sudanese refugee influx into Sudan

UNHCR in Sudan was challenged by the lack of financial and human resources from the beginning of the South Sudanese refugee crisis, which influenced the efficiency and effectiveness of their response. Sudan was one of four major countries of asylum for South Sudanese refugees and UNHCR arguably faced the greatest challenges in scaling up their response, starting from the lack of a clear role due to a GoS decision to designate South Sudanese in Sudan as “brothers and sisters”, only changing their status to refugees in 2016. By the beginning of 2018, however, UNHCR Sudan was playing a leading role in the response and they were continuing to increase their capacity in WNS. There was room for improvement of UNHCR’s VFM, notably in increasing participation by refugee and host communities. Although UNHCR have continued to face important constraints, significant improvements in the operating environment from the end of 2017 should pave the way for UNHCR to address critical gaps and make use of their coordination role to facilitate a move towards durable solutions for South Sudanese refugees in Sudan.

UNHCR Operations

Conclusion 1: There is a need to move to targeted assistance while making appropriate use of cash-based initiatives to improve cost effectiveness and coverage of vulnerable groups.

The protracted nature of the crisis, now in its 4th year, combined with a restricted funding environment and evidence of disparate levels of need amongst PoCs indicate a need to move towards more systematic targeting where cash-based options could play a useful role, a conclusion which is consistent with results of the 2016 Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) and a 2017 independent evaluation covering WFP Sudan’s operations in WNS. A move towards targeting would have been difficult with the basic level of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), notably in terms of participation and communication with refugees and host communities.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 5, Conclusion 2

Conclusion 2: UNHCR and their partners have not fulfilled many AGD core actions, notably meaningful participation and inclusion of beneficiary communities.

Interviews, document review, observations along with the results of a rapid AAP assessment conducted by the evaluation team found low levels for all three categories; communication, participation and complaints/feedback systems with both refugees and host communities. Interventions in the camps have been largely contractor-driven with little consultation or participation by the community. The result has been a lack of ownership of community structures, including frequent theft of community goods, decreased cost effectiveness of interventions and a growing dependency on external assistance and support.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 4, 5

Conclusion 3: UNHCR Sudan's core focus on refugee coordination and protection is appropriate, but protection has yet to be fully mainstreamed across all sectors and integrated in UNHCR's coordination role.

While facing challenges in accessing PoCs and capacity gaps, UNHCR has kept protection at the centre of its Sudan operation. As sectoral coverage and scale of UNHCR's operations has increased, protection has not been mainstreamed consistently. The most recent versions of the Protection and sector specific strategies have not specifically addressed mainstreaming which has increased the risk of a siloed approach.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Conclusion 2

Conclusion 4. An alternative approach is needed for investments in permanent infrastructure so as to better provide equitable protection and assistance.

There has been a lack of alignment between meeting UNHCR's standards that aim to meet basic protection and assistance needs for those in need and the GoS requirements to invest in relatively costly contractor-driven permanent infrastructure. In this protracted crisis contest where a likely scenario is local integration of a proportion of the refugee population it is in good practice to invest in permanent infrastructure. However, the current approach has resulted in widespread unmet needs and an alternative approach is needed.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 4, 5

Conclusion 5. There were more partnership options available to UNHCR to fill critical gaps than during the initial phases of the response.

Selection of partners was limited during the initial phase of operations by GoS restrictions on which partners UNHCR and its partners can work, which undermined the efficiency and effectiveness of the response. While partnership agreements are tripartite the range of potential partners has increased since 2017 which provides UNHCR with an opportunity to take a more strategic approach to partner selection and capacity building.

Based on findings from EQ 2, 4, 5, Conclusion 10

Conclusion 6. UNHCR Sudan has had difficulties in systematically capturing results in a way that promotes learning and accountability to affected populations.

The evaluation team faced a key constraint while assessing results with the variable quality of monitoring data provided by UNHCR and their partners. With the exception of shelter and non-food items (NFI), which has collected PDM data on a routine basis since 2017, reporting was mainly at the activity/output level and UNHCR did not routinely track major cost drivers, which could have helped to improve VFM. UNHCR Sudan had a programme review system in place but the evaluation team did not find evidence of UNHCR-led or partner lessons-learned reviews that could, for example, inform annual planning exercises. UNHCR Sudan has made significant improvements to their information management systems since 2017 but the design has mainly targeted at donors with lower priority given to supporting monitoring and learning at a field level or enhance AAP.

Based on findings from EQ 2 and Conclusion 2

UNHCR Strategy

Conclusion 7: The efficiency and effectiveness of UNHCR's programme has been reduced by gaps in preparedness and the lack of a clear multi-year strategy for this protracted crisis.

UNHCR understood at an early stage that this was likely to be a prolonged crisis and many of UNHCR Sudan's initiatives and approaches have been consistent with medium- to longer-term planning. There was nevertheless a gap between UNHCR's sector-specific strategies, which cover multiple-years, and UNHCR's broad strategic objectives in the OCHA-led multi-year strategy. Even while major donors continue to express their concern about the lack of a clear vision of UNHCR's programme in WNS, some have nevertheless adhered to their Grand Bargain commitments by earmarking multi-year commitments even though UNHCR's global budgeting system only allows annual contributions. UNHCR and partners were not fully prepared for the large influx during 2017, which has also contributed to inefficiencies.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 3, 4, Conclusions 4, 8, 10

Conclusion 8. Differing expectations and mixed results from strategic partnerships with peer UN agencies during earlier stages has eroded the teamwork that was evident during the initial phases of the response.

UNHCR Sudan viewed the launch of the Refugee Coordination Model in early 2014 as an opportunity to undertake joint action with selected UN strategic partners to help face challenges with access to PoCs and lack of technical capacities. The team approach that was evident during 2014-2015 subsequently broke down when agencies were not delivering according to each other's expectations within a system where each agency was mainly accountable to their respective donors, not to each other. Similarly, there was little evidence of an interagency mechanism for following implementing recommendations emerging from joint assessments such as the JAM. As UNHCR

increased their capacity, they became less dependent on the technical capacities of UN strategic partners and have reverted to a model of delivering primarily through implementing partners.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 3, 4, Conclusions 3, 9, 10

Conclusion 9. UNHCR Sudan is likely to find it challenging to continue to provide VFM leading multiple sectors in the medium- to long-term.

Findings from this evaluation largely support UNHCR's decision to increase their technical capacities across various sectors given the positive effect it had on the quality of interventions and refugee-related coordination. However, unless there is another significant influx or return, it will become increasingly difficult to demonstrate value-added to refugees and affected populations of broad sectoral coverage given UNHCR's relatively high operating cost along with its lack of development expertise. Ministries at national level and, especially state level, are likely to be key partners although studies have cautioned against an overreliance on government capacities when designing an exit strategy since this often compromises sustainability.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 3, 4, Conclusions 5, 7

Conclusion 10. The lack of a capacity building strategy based on a needs assessment has reduced the effectiveness of UNHCR's programme.

Building national capacities has been a key component of UNHCR RRRPs which provided UNHCR and its partners, both international and more experienced national NGOs, with the opportunity to demonstrate VFM and justify the relatively higher costs of international agencies compared to local actors. A key objective in the Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategy for 2017-2019 led by OCHA in Sudan was building national capacities. With the notable exception of annual training for partners in UNHCR project management and reporting, training provided to date has been on an ad hoc basis without clear links to capacity assessments of partners.

Based on findings from EQ 1, 2, 3 Conclusions 2, 3, 5

Recommendations

Ten recommendations targeted primarily at UNHCR Sudan are listed below, many of which are also relevant to their partners. Each recommendation follows from the conclusion in the previous section with the same number. Summary versions of these recommendations were reviewed during an interagency workshop⁷⁸ or a debriefing session with UNHCR staff at the end of the field mission to Sudan. Participants in the workshop were given an opportunity to assess their relevance, achievability and relative priority and, if desired, suggest any missing recommendations. All of the recommendations presented were found to be relevant and most were seen to be achievable. Feedback and subsequent research by the evaluation team thus focused on strengthening the achievability of recommendations.

UNHCR Operations

R1. Move to targeted assistance to address critical unmet needs combined with longer-term livelihood support. This transition should include piloting cash-based initiatives by, for example, carrying out assessments and accountability to affected populations (AAP) initiatives together with selected strategic partners to improve cost-effectiveness.

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Conduct a participatory vulnerability needs assessment jointly with strategic partners (e.g. GoS, WFP, UNICEF) combined with a cash-based initiative assessment⁷⁹ with the aim of developing criteria that is accepted by both recipient and non-recipient populations to avoid creating tensions;
- Prioritise resources to meet urgent needs such as shelter for vulnerable groups and sanitation using a participatory approach;
- Support the assessment with a communication strategy so that targeting approaches are clear both recipient and non-recipient populations; and
- Develop a joint action plan based on results supported by a responsibility assignment matrix.⁸⁰

Medium-term priorities: within the next 12 months:

- Update registration based on agreed criteria together with community-level stakeholders supported by a communications strategy to ensure transparency;

⁷⁸ The workshop agenda is attached as Annex 3

⁷⁹ This could be a JAM if appropriate.

⁸⁰ http://www.valuebasedmanagement.net/methods_raci.html

- Establish a monitoring and learning system with feedback loops so that systems can be adjusted to be fit-for-purpose;
- Begin implementation of activities in the action plan, which may include pilot activities (e.g. cash distributions). It will be important to ensure that those responsible for targeting have the necessary capabilities to promote trust and are able to do their work in an impartial and accountable way;
- Synthesis learning in a review that can inform annual planning exercises of UNHCR and partners.

R2. Strengthen accountability to affected populations, refugees and host communities, to promote dignity, ownership, cost effectiveness and sustainability of interventions.

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Share relevant lessons learned and tools;⁸¹
- Review relevant guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures, etc. with an AAP lens to identify improvements needed when next revised; and
- Facilitate discussions and/or workshops in Khartoum and in the field to agree, both internally and with partners, on what changes in ways of working that would improve AAP to fulfil relevant commitments;⁸²
- Revise the design of the AGD participatory assessment so that it fulfils UNHCR’s commitment to meaningfully engage women, men, girls, and boys to mobilise capacities, in addition to assessing needs, to increase community ownership of programmes.

Medium-term priorities: within the next 12 months:

- Develop an accountability framework for UNHCR and include a review of progress during routine planning events; and
- Incorporate relevant AAP elements into capacity building, strategies and guidelines.
- Consider the value-added of a cross-visit to Protection of Civilian centres in South Sudan to learn from good practice examples with using participatory approaches in congested sites.

R3. Promote protection mainstreaming throughout UNHCR, GoS partners and implementing partners through awareness-raising, capacity building, integrated approaches and improvements in community-level feedback and complaints systems.

⁸¹ e.g. the [Good Enough Guide for Accountability](#) and lessons learned from East Darfur where community leaders and all stakeholders at site or camp level are involved in decision making.

⁸² For example, UNHCR’s AGD core actions, IASC AAP commitments, [the Core Humanitarian Standard](#), accountability frameworks of individual agencies. These workshops should be an opportunity to validate the revised guidelines and SOPs, and improve as needed based on feedback, and promote their use.

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Circulate key policies, lessons learned and tools;
- Each UNHCR focal point to review and identify changes needed to Protection and sector strategies, workplans and related Standard Operating Procedures to incorporate protection mainstreaming.
- Develop a responsibility assignment matrix as part of the work plan supporting UNHCR Sudan's Protection Strategy.
- Facilitate workshops in Khartoum and in the field to agree on what changes in ways of working that would improve mainstreaming,⁸³ and

Medium-term priorities: within the next 12 months:

- Revise Protection and sector strategies, workplans and related Standard Operating Procedures; and
- Incorporate relevant guidance into capacity building.

R4. Adopt a transitional⁸⁴ or modular approach to shelters and community infrastructure such as schools to increase coverage and community ownership while ensuring durability of completed structures.

R5. Improve partnership selection, supported through capacity building, to fill critical gaps and help ensure improved quality and accountability of UNHCR-supported interventions at a community level.

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Update the gaps and needs analysis of partner capacities; and
- Use the results of the gaps and needs analysis to inform the capacity building strategy (see R9).

Medium-term priorities: within 12 months

- Review⁸⁵ and revise protocols for partner procurement processes to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the process; and

⁸³ As for the AAP workshops, these workshops should provide an opportunity to validate the revised guidelines and SOPs, and improve as needed based on feedback, and promote their use.

⁸⁴ Sphere defines transitional shelters as those designed from materials and techniques that can be upgraded, re-used, or recycled for use in more permanent structures, or that can be relocated from temporary sites to permanent locations. They are designed to transition affected populations to more durable shelter.

⁸⁵ The review should be informed by relevant guidance and good practice from selected countries.

- Apply revised procedures and communication protocols during the subsequent procurement processes to link partner selection more systematically to past performance and capacities to fill specific gaps.

R6. Strengthen collection and management of monitoring data in a way that captures learning improves outcome level monitoring so as to better inform interventions and more clearly demonstrate contributions to strategic objectives. Consider using a write-shop⁸⁶ approach to measure outcomes in a participatory format.

UNHCR Strategy

R7. Develop a 3-year multi-year strategy in consultations with partners which is divided into one-year annual plans and linked to the OCHA-led multi-year strategy. Such a strategy should encourage a shift from camp-based to area-based planning approaches, strategic partnerships and engagement with private sector to help in moving towards durable solutions and decrease dependency of PoC. An appropriate process could be designed based on lessons learned from OCHA's multi-year strategic planning processes. The strategy should include a robust emergency preparedness plan that is appropriately resourced.

R8. Further improve team work with strategic partners, including joint fundraising, improving alignment between RRRPs and HRP and improving the efficiency of coordination meetings where UNHCR has a lead role.⁸⁷

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Convene a working session/workshop involving field and Khartoum-based staff from UNHCR and WFP with the task of proposing realistic options for joint work to improve the reliability and timeliness of registration and validation processes;
- When planning for joint assessments and other joint activities, agree with strategic partners on a responsibility assignment matrix.

Medium-term priorities: within 12 months

- Conduct another JAM with WFP which includes in its scope, to the extent possible, other relevant recommendations (i.e. targeting, AAP, multi-year planning).

R9. As a component of the multi-year strategy, include a description of a process for eventual handover of sector lead responsibilities to strategic partners and relevant

⁸⁶ See <http://www.kstoolkit.org/Writeshops> and <http://www.writeshops.org/> and a case study of LWF Kenya pilot at <https://kwetukakuma.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/writeshops-enhancing-community-participation-in-report-writing.pdf>

⁸⁷ This recommendation is similar to one made by the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) to HCT members during their mission in 2014.

line ministries where appropriate to allow UNHCR and their main partners to prioritise its resources on core areas where they add most value.

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Develop a stakeholder map of potential strategic partners based on the multi-year strategy (R6) and the capacity assessment (R9) to help select and prioritise partnerships to support exit strategies;
- Develop a framework with indicators and milestones to provide an ongoing assessment to be able to track both progress towards an exit strategy and UNHCR's own value-added, to help ensure that UNHCR is maximising AAP.

Medium-term priorities: within 12 months

- Joint planning with strategic partners;
- Draft or revise MoUs to reflect revised arrangements.

R10. Integrate capacity building approach into UNHCR's way of working by developing a specific capacity building strategy in consultation with partners to building national capacities and proactively engaging partners to fill specific gaps.

Immediate priorities: within the next 6 months:

- Draft a capacity needs assessment divided into short term/current year needs and medium-/longer-term needs;
- Develop a prioritised training plan with a responsibility assignment matrix and budget; and
- Implement immediate priorities.

Medium-term priorities: within 12 months

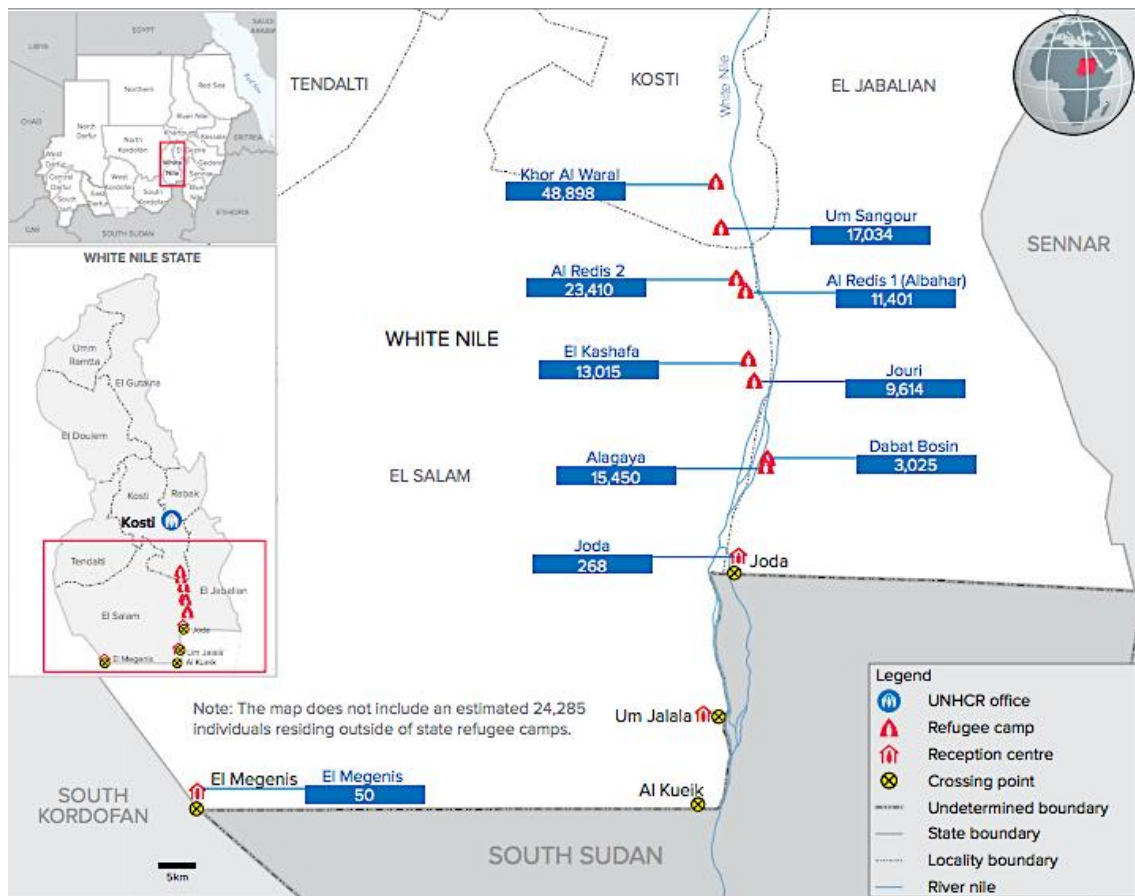
- Periodic review and update of the training plan.

Annex 1 – Field Visit Itinerary

Milestone	Dates
Arrival of Team Leader in Sudan	01 April 2018
Orientation meetings in Khartoum	2–3 April 2018
Field visit to WNS, including visit to Jouri, Redis and Khor Al Waral refugee camps	4–13 April 2018
Interviews in Khartoum	13–25 April 2018
Interagency workshop at UNHCR Khartoum with phone link with UNHCR Kosti	23 April 2018
Debriefing for UNHCR Sudan staff	25 April 2018
Departure of Team Leader from Sudan	26 April 2018
Debriefing at UNHCR HQ Geneva	02 May 2018

Annex 2 – Refugee Site Map⁸⁸

Locations of refugee camps and reception sites in WNS are shown below.



⁸⁸ UNHCR, COS, HAC, IOM, SRCS (population figures as of January 2018)

Annex 3 – Validation Workshop Agenda

Background

Evaluation team members will facilitate the workshop. They will present provisional findings and emerging conclusions and recommendations based on the team’s desk research, interviews and field visit to Sudan. The workshop is timed to take place at the end of the field visit before the draft report has been circulated. This workshop will give participants a chance to review and discuss provisional findings and emerging conclusions and recommendations in plenary before breaking into small groups to discuss emerging recommendations to assess their relevance and feasibility and give an opportunity to suggest revisions and/or additions. There will be working groups with 4-6 participants in Khartoum and another two “virtual” working groups in Kosti.

Objectives

- Review and validate provisional findings and emerging conclusions/recommendations;
- Provide the evaluation team with perspectives from UNHCR Sudan, partners and other key stakeholders on priorities, completeness of the evidence base, how the evaluation can be made more useful, etc.; and
- Help to ensure that the recommendations are relevant and achievable (realistic) through validation and suggesting additional operational guidance.

Agenda for the Interagency Workshop – UNHCR Sudan – 23 April 2018

Time	Topic	Format
09:00-09:15	Introduction of Participants	Plenary
09:15-10:15	Introductory Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives of the Review • Presentation of Provisional Findings and Emerging Conclusions / Recommendations • High level feedback and questions of clarification 	Plenary
10:15-12:00	Working groups will fill in the templates provided to respond to the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the emerging recommendations relevant? How realistic/achievable are they? 2. Are there important recommendations missing? 3. What should be the priorities? What are short- and longer-term 	Working Groups
12:00-12:55	Break	
12:55-13:50	Report back from selected groups	Plenary
13:50-14:00	Wrap-up and next steps	Plenary

Annex 4 – Documents Consulted

The following bibliography presents the list of documents consulted during the drafting of the evaluation report. It is presented by order of author (alphabetical) and then year (ascending).

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- UNHCR (2017c) Summary of overall recommendations in the participatory needs Assessment-Kosti: 22-23 November 2017
- UNHCR (2018a) Applying Comprehensive Responses (CRRF) in Africa.
- UNHCR (2018b) Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity - UNHCR/HCP/2018/
- UNHCR (2018c) Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) WNS-Sudan: Preliminary Report
- UNICEF (2017) Report on Needs Assessment of Out of Camp Refugees in White Nile – MCH/UNICEF/UNHCR/WFP
- UNICEF (2018) Sudan: Humanitarian Action for Children
- WFP (2016) Food Security Assessment: South Sudanese Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities: White Nile State.
- WFP (2017a) WFP Sudan Country Brief. November 2017
- WFP (2017b) Operation Evaluation: Sudan Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 200808: Support for food security and nutrition for conflict-affected and chronically vulnerable populations (1st July 2015 – 30th June 2017) – Management Response
- WHO (2017) Sudan: Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance. May 2017
- World Bank (2012) Education in the Republic of South Sudan: Status and Challenges for a New System. Africa Human Development Series.

In addition to the above list, a range of reports, updates and other documents of UNHCR, other UN agencies and partners were also consulted during this evaluation.

Annex 5 – List of Persons Interviewed

White Nile State – UNHCR Interviewees

Name	Org. and function	♂	♀	Date	Interviewee Location
Emad Abdulmagid	Head of UNHCR Field Office-Kosti	1		7-Mar-18	Kosti (phone)
Hussein Abdalla	National Officer Field/Protection	1		7-Mar-18	Kosti
Alsadig Idris	WASH Coordinator, UNHCR Kosti	1		10-Apr-18	Kosti
Wesam Salah	UNHCR-Health & Nutrition	1		12-Apr-18	Kosti
Adil Kamoun	Emergency Shelter & NFI Coordinator	1		8-Apr-18	Kosti
Musa SHATA	Programme Associate	1		8-Apr-18	Kosti
Jovica ZARIC	Assoc Field Officer/Protection	1		13-Apr-18	Kosti
Wael Hashem	Snr. Data Management Assistant	1		8-Apr-18	Kosti
Triantafyllia Efthymiou	Associate Protection Officer		1	8-Apr-18	Kosti
Neige Pointet	Associate External Relation & Reporting Officer		1	10-Apr-18	Kosti

White Nile State – Other Interviewees

Name	Org. and function	♂	♀	FGD	Date	Interviewee Location
Alwathig Eltayeb	COR WNS	1			5-Apr-18	Kosti
Mohamed Abdalaziz	COR WNS	1			5-Apr-18	Kosti
Dr. Musab Makin	UNFPA	1			5-Apr-18	Kosti
Omer Marouf	Plan Sudan WNS	1			5-Apr-18	Kosti
Abdalbagi Alsedig	COR - Joury camp- Dep.manger	1			7-Apr-18	Joury camp
Mohamed Omer	COR- Joury camp- protection	1			7-Apr-18	Joury camp
Host community Leaders	Joury village	7		1	7-Apr-18	Joury camp
Host community Women	Joury village		7	1	7-Apr-18	Joury camp
South Sudanese Women	SS Refugee camp Joury		6	1	7-Apr-18	Joury camp
South Sudanese Leaders	SS Refugee camp Joury	6		1	7-Apr-18	Joury camp
Disabled of Joury camp	SS Refugee camp Joury	4	2	1	7-Apr-18	Joury camp
Abdalmoneim Othman	COR-Redis 2 camp manger	1			8-Apr-18	Redis 2 camp
South Sudanese camp Leaders	SS Refugee camp Redis	3	3	1	8-Apr-18	Redis 2 camp
South Sudanese Women	SS Refugee camp Redis		6	1	8-Apr-18	Redis 2 camp
South Sudanese Youth	SS Refugee camp Redis	3	2	1	8-Apr-18	Redis 2 camp
Host community Leaders	Redis village	8		1	8-Apr-18	Redis 2 camp
Host community Women	Redis village		2	1	8-Apr-18	Redis 2 camp
Hisham Mostafa	COR-Waral camp Dep. Manager	1			9-Apr-18	Waral camp
South Sudanese Leaders	SS Refugee camp Waral	13		1	9-Apr-18	Waral camp

<i>Name</i>	<i>Org. and function</i>	♂	♀	<i>FGD</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee Location</i>
South Sudanese Women	SS Refugee camp Waral		9	1	9-Apr-18	Waral camp
South Sudanese Youth	SS Refugee camp Waral	10	2	1	9-Apr-18	Waral camp
Host community Leaders	Waral host village	5		1	9-Apr-18	Waral camp
Dr. Ahmed Suliman	MSF-Spain- Khor Waral	1			9-Apr-18	Waral camp
Khalid Saror	WHO-WN	1			10-Apr-18	Kosti
Talal Ahmed	Assist Org. WN	1			10-Apr-18	Kosti
Mohamed Suliman	Assist Org. WN	1			10-Apr-18	Kosti
Elham Alamin	Assist Org. WN		1		10-Apr-18	Kosti
Jerameh namuya	MSF-Spain-Field Coordination	1			10-Apr-18	Kosti
Altayeb Mohamed Abdallah	Secretry General of WN government	1			11-Apr-18	Rabak
Abdalgawi	HAC commissioner	1			11-Apr-18	Rabak
Ismail Ali	MOH - EHA manager	1			11-Apr-18	Rabak
Zenab Hebat	WFP -head of WN office		1		11-Apr-18	Kosti
Sabir Dedan	WFP -program assistance	1			11-Apr-18	Kosti
Azaa Anwer	UNICEF		1		11-Apr-18	Kosti
Mohamed Idris	UNICEF	1			11-Apr-18	Kosti
Salma Alkamil, Ahmad Hassan	WASH Specialist & Technical Specialist & ADRA	1	1		11-Apr-18	Kosti
Rahma Alemam	WES	1			11-Apr-18	Rabak
Ali Abdallah	WES	1			11-Apr-18	Rabak
Bilal Abdalrahman	WES	1			11-Apr-18	Rabak
Adam Alnekaib	SRC-WN	1			11-Apr-18	Kosti
Juma Abdalrahman	SRC-WN	1			11-Apr-18	Kosti
Mohamed Ishag	CAFOD	1			12-Apr-18	Kosti
Bashir Mansour	CAFOD	1			12-Apr-18	Kosti
Moez Abdallah	MOSA - social worker supervisor	1			12-Apr-18	Rabak
Suzan Abdalrazig	MOSA - Compact of violence against women and children		1		12-Apr-18	Rabak

Khartoum – UNHCR Interviewees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Org. and function</i>	♂	♀	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee Location</i>
Elizabeth Tan	Deputy Representative	1		2-Apr-18	Khartoum
Mr. Mesfin Degefu	Assistant Representative (Program)		1	3-Apr-18	Khartoum
Mr. Aung Thu Wina	Information Management officer		1	3-Apr-18	Khartoum
Magda Saad	Assistant Human Resources Officer		1	15-Apr-18	Khartoum

<i>Name</i>	<i>Org. and function</i>	♂	♀	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee Location</i>
Solafa Satti	Assistant Human Resources Officer		1	15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ubaid Ullah	Physical Site Planner	1		15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Alexander Woart	Associate Supply officer	1		15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Seid Ahmed Saleh	Associate Supply officer	1		15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Nassur Muwonge	Public Health Officer			15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ahmed Daffallah	Associate Health & Nutrition Officer	1		15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Luckson Katsi	WASH Specialist	1		15-Apr-18	Khartoum
Medhave Raj Belbase	Protection officer (child)	1		16-Apr-18	Khartoum
Mesfin Degefue	Ass. Rep. Program	1		16-Apr-18	Khartoum
Jacqueline Kegode	Livelihoods officer		1	16-Apr-18	Khartoum
Adan Dakane	Project Control Officer	1		16-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ms. Miranda Geendr	Liaison Officer, UNHCR, Khartoum		1	17-Apr-18	Khartoum
Hassan Mourad	Associate Registration Officer	1		17-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ms. Noriko Yoshida,	Representative		1	18-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ermin Buturovic	Senior Administrative Officer	1		23-Apr-18	Khartoum
Samuel Tadesse	Nutrition and food security officer	1		6-Apr-18	Khartoum
Dr. Abdalrahman	Environmental Specialist	1		13-May-18	Khartoum
Carol Sparks	Senior Interagency Coordination Officer, UNHCR Lebanon, former Liaison Officer, UNHCR Sudan		1		Beirut (phone)
Walter Baumgartner	WASH Specialist/Coordinator	1		7-May-18	Berne (phone)

Khartoum – Other Interviewees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Org. and function</i>	♂	♀	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee Location</i>
Hamad Aljizoli Morowa	COR Commissioner	1		2-Apr-18	Khartoum
Mr. Stephane Pichet, Rashid Abdullah and Adan Bekele	Chief Field Operations and Emergency, Health & Nutrition Specialist and WASH Manager, UNICEF	3		17-Apr-18	Khartoum
Paul Howe and Jasmin	Country Director & Deputy Country Director, ADRA Sudan	1	1	18-Apr-18	Khartoum
Yousif Fadul	Adviser, WHO	1		18-Apr-18	Khartoum

Name	Org. and function	♂	♀	Date	Interviewee Location
Srinivas Kumar, Mohamed Elsidieg and Tomo Serizawa	Programme Manager, WNS Focal Point and Stabilization. Migration and PAVE (Partnering Against Violent Extremism), UNDP (Focus Group)	3		18-Apr-18	Khartoum
Afra Noha	Program Policy Officer, WFP Sudan		1	19-Apr-18	Khartoum
Maysaa Algaribawy	WFP- Head of Area Office (CETA) and Sr Government Liaison Officer, WFP Sudan		1	21-Apr-18	Khartoum
Misheil Mongenda - Salman Musa - Stephen Molow	Sudan representative of CAFOD - wash program CAFOD- Development program CAFOD	3		19-Apr-18	Khartoum
Abdallah Suliman	Advisor, SRCS	1		19-Apr-18	Khartoum
Driss Moumane & Ivan Zenar	Country Directors for Catholic Relief Services and Welthungerlife	2		23-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ruth Mukwana	Acting Head of Office, OCHA Sudan		1	25-Apr-18	Khartoum
Ibrahim Abdalla Mohamed	Protection Officer, COR	1		24-Apr-18	Khartoum
Mr. Mohamed Yassin Altohami	Deputy Commissioner, COR	1		25-Apr-18	Khartoum
Tilal Salih	UNICEF-Education Specialist, UNICEF	1		7-May-18	Khartoum
Wigdan Adam	Education sector Coordinator, UNICEF		1	7-May-18	Khartoum
Juli Pharand	WASH Sector Coordinator, UNICEF		1	7-May-18	Khartoum
Dr Arun K Mallik	Health Cluster Coordinator, WHO	1		7-May-18	Khartoum
Lilian Kuna	Child Protection Officer, UNICEF		1	7-May-18	Khartoum
Sylvister Morlue	Child Protect Specialist, UNICEF	1		7-May-18	Khartoum
Talal Farouq	Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF	1		7-May-18	Khartoum
Dr. Robert Ndamobissi	Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, UNICEF	1		7-May-18	Khartoum
Mr Yahya Kabashi	Project Manager, SIDO	1		8-May-18	Khartoum
Ismail Dawod	Program officer	1		13-May-18	Khartoum
Ulrich Muller	Counsellor for Humanitarian and Development, Swiss Development Cooperation	1		19-Apr-18	Khartoum
Charlie Mason	Humanitarian Adviser, DFID Sudan	1		19-Apr-18	Khartoum
Sophie Battas	Head of office ECHO		1	22-Apr-18	Khartoum

Regional & Global – UNHCR Interviewees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Org. and function</i>	♂	♀	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee Location</i>
Angela Li Rosi & Karim Amer	Deputy Director, Bureau for Europe	1	1	2-May-18	Geneva
Meliha Hadziabdic	Snr. Desk Officer		1	7-Mar-18	Geneva
Mildred Ouma	Senior Protection Officer for the RRC and Special Adviser for the South Sudan situation		1	15-May-18	Nairobi (phone)

Regional & Global – Other Interviewees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Org. and function</i>	♂	♀	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee Location</i>
David Moore	Refugee Coordinator, Refugees, Population & Migration, US Embassy in Ethiopia	1		3-May-18	Addis Ababa (phone)
Michael Castle-Miller	Executive Director, Refugee Cities	1		10-May-18	Los Angeles (Skype)

Annex 6 – Interview Guide

The interview guide below is based on the Evaluation Matrix in the Inception Report. Questions marked with an asterisk were viewed as particularly relevant to focus group discussions (FGD) with refugees and host communities.

This interview guide is not intended to be a questionnaire, rather to be used as a checklist during semi-structured interviews and FGD to ensure that team is collecting relevant data to build a credible evidence base to support conclusions and recommendations under each evaluation question. It is often useful to start by asking high level questions such as “*tell me about the evolution of the programme? What were the key events/milestones?*” and “*what have been the particular achievements and challenges with UNHCR-supported activities and how do these compare with projects funded by other donors and implemented by other agencies?*” and guide the discussion by probing with relevant sub-questions.

It is not expected that key informants will be able to respond to all the sub-questions. The main reasons for first trying to understand the background and experience of the key informant is to give team members an idea of which sub-questions key informants will be able to answer.

It will be crucial for evaluation team members to respect evaluation norms, ethics and standards. Apart from the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards at www.uneg.org, particularly those sections directly relevant to evaluators.





Key Question	Sub Question
<p>Key question 1:</p> <p>To what extent have UNHCR and partner strategies and objectives for the refugee response been relevant and appropriate, taking into account the changing operational environment and evolving context?</p>	<p>1.1. To what extent have the Sudan chapters in the Regional Response Plan represented a clearly-articulated strategy for the response?</p> <p>1.2 To what extent have the design of UNHCR-led RRRP strategies and objectives been based on timely needs assessments, and adapted to changing contexts? *</p> <p>1.3. Have UNHCR and partner strategies and objectives been sufficiently tailored to the specific needs and priorities of Persons of Concern (PoC), particularly women and children and vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled)? *</p> <p>1.4 To what extent have UNHCR and partner strategies involved participation, community-based approaches, awareness raising, and how has the inclusion or omission of these approaches contributed to the relevance and appropriateness of the strategic approach undertaken? *</p>

Key Question	Sub Question
<p>Key question 2:</p> <p>To what extent have UNHCR and partners achieved the expected results, taking account of key contributing and constraining factors?</p>	<p>2.1 What have been the key contributing or constraining factors influencing the overall effectiveness of the refugee response? What influence has the semi-remote management context had on the refugee response?</p> <p>2.2 What have been the intended and unintended results of the response for refugee women, men, girls and boys? *</p> <p>2.3 What has been UNHCR’s contribution to building capacity of local partners and national Government for effective refugee response?</p> <p>2.4 How effectively has UNHCR ensured adherence to relevant and established technical quality standards – particularly in the WASH, public health and nutrition sectors –during the refugee response? *</p> <p>2.5: What is extent of M&E and learning systems put in place, and how effective are these in tracking outputs, outcomes and lessons?</p> <p>2.5 How effective have been remote management systems used by UNHCR during the earlier phases of the crisis?</p> <p>2.6 Has UNHCR provided timely, adequate and appropriate staffing, logistical and financial resources to achieve intended results? To what extent can these investments be viewed as providing value for money (VFM)?</p>
<p>Key question 3:</p> <p>How well has UNHCR exercised its refugee response coordination responsibilities?</p>	<p>3.1 How effectively has UNHCR’s coordination role in the refugee response promoted synergies with concerned actors, avoiding gaps and duplication? *</p> <p>3.2 How effectively has UNHCR identified and addressed partner capacity gaps and needs? To what extent have appropriate partners (including national and local stakeholders) been identified and mobilised to assist the response effort?</p> <p>3.3 How well have UNHCR and partners, through the Refugee Consultation Forum coordinated at the national level, at the White Nile State level, and internally between the national and White Nile State levels? *</p> <p>3.4 To what extent have UNHCR and partners, through the Refugee Consultation Forum (previously, Refugee Multi- Sector), established and agreed harmonised approaches and common standards for the refugee response?</p>

Key Question	Sub Question
<p>Key question 4:</p> <p>To what extent have medium and longer-term objectives and solutions been given due consideration in planning and decision-making processes?</p>	<p>4.1 To what extent have medium and longer-term considerations been reflected in prioritisation, national capacity building, design of strategy and implementation of activities?</p> <p>4.2 What have been the key contributing and constraining factors to UNHCR pursuing and delivering on its ‘Alternative to Camps’ policy, and livelihoods strategy?</p>
<p>Key question 5:</p> <p>To what extent have UNHCR-led protection and assistance interventions reached all intended Persons of Concern?</p>	<p>5.1 To what extent has the refugee response been accountable to affected people?*</p> <p>5.2 How effectively have UNHCR Sudan’s AGD and participatory assessments been implemented, and were there any constraining factors in introducing its mechanisms, or tools? *</p> <p>5.3 Were there any coverage gaps in terms of ethnicity, location, gender or age group? To what extent has the level of assistance and/or protection provided been proportional to identified needs? What were the key internal and external factors contributing to the gap(s)? *</p>

Annex 7 – AAP Participatory Assessment Results

A rapid assessment tool was used during fourteen FGDs, nine with refugees and six with host communities,⁸⁹ to provide a qualitative assessment of their relationship with agencies and their partners using indicators for information-sharing, participation and complaints/feedback. The yellow shaded area in the table below shows that most agencies were seen as falling into the “Basic” category, although responses by some committee members in refugee camps and host communities indicated they were in the “Intermediate” category.

	Which of the following four statements best describe your experience?			
	 (Basic)	 (Intermediate)	 (Mature)	 (AAP Compliant)¹
How much information you have about the agencies and the project? (<i>Information Sharing</i>)	I know nothing about the agencies or the project	I know little about the agencies or the project	I know a lot about the agencies and I have good knowledge about the project	I know a lot about the agencies and about the project including activities, plans and budgets
The ways in which you have been involved in the different steps of agency projects (<i>Participation</i>)	I'm informed but not involved, the agencies tell me what the project will do and how this affects me	I'm consulted – the agencies discuss options with me but I'm not part of the final decision made by the agencies	I'm involved – we sit together and take the decision together	I'm leading the decision which is then implemented by the agencies
The way(s) in which you can provide feedback to the agencies about the project (<i>Complaints And Feedback Handling</i>)	I do not know how to provide feedback about the agencies and do not use any feedback and complaint mechanism	I know and am able to provide feedback about the agencies but am not sure how agencies use that feedback – there has been no response to my feedback	I know and have used feedback or complaint mechanisms and I know that feedback has influenced some decisions taken by the agencies	I use feedback mechanisms regularly to influence decision making and make changes to the project

⁸⁹ The 14 FGDs included 3 refugee camp committees, 3 refugee women groups, 2 mixed boy/girl refugee youth groups, 1 FGD composed of disabled refugees, 3 host community leaders, 2 women FGD from host communities.

Annex 8 – Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

EVALUATION OF THE UNHCR SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE RESPONSE IN White Nile State

Title of the evaluation:	Independent evaluation of the UNHCR and partner response to South Sudanese refugees in White Nile State, Sudan.
Commissioned by:	UNHCR Sudan
Proposed duration:	January – April 2018

I. Introduction

UNHCR Sudan and key supporting donors have agreed that there are lessons that may be learned from the refugee response in White Nile State (WNS). As such, UNHCR is commissioning an independent evaluation of the UNHCR and partner response to the South Sudanese refugee influx in WNS between December 2013 and June 2017. The evaluation will be undertaken in line with the revised [UNHCR Evaluation Policy](#) issued in October 2016. These Terms of Reference (TOR) have been prepared by UNHCR Sudan with the assistance of the UNHCR Evaluation Service, and outline the purpose, focus and deliverables. These TOR also set out the key evaluation questions and outline the provisional evaluation methodology. In-country data collection is tentatively scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2018.

The subject of this evaluation is the ongoing UNHCR South Sudanese refugee response in WNS. UNHCR launched its operational response to the influx of South Sudanese refugees into Sudan following the outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013. Along with international and national partners, UNHCR continues to ensure the provision of protection and assistance, including shelter, non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, nutrition, education, and food for new arrivals in WNS through, at times, semi-remote management arrangements.

II. Operational Context

The influx of South Sudanese refugees that began in late 2013 mainly into WNS and early 2016 into East and South Darfur continues, driven by deteriorating food security and continuing violence in South Sudan. To date close to 400,000 South Sudanese refugees have sought safety in Sudan. The majority of refugees arriving since 2013 are women and children often in poor nutrition and health conditions, with very few opportunities for livelihood and subsistence activities. Relief items, including food, nutrition and emergency household supplies have been provided to almost all new arrivals and personal hygiene kits distributed to pregnant and lactating women. However, overcrowded conditions continue to prevail at

many sites, and malnutrition rates recorded through surveys in 2016 are above emergency levels in WNS.

Importantly, the Government of Sudan has maintained an open border policy allowing safe and unrestricted access to its territory for those fleeing the conflict in South Sudan, and has ensured their immediate protection and safety within its borders.

Due to a deterioration of conditions in South Sudan, including a worsening political situation evidenced in the events in Juba at the beginning of July 2016, there are growing concerns that the situation in South Sudan is unlikely to stabilize soon and that instability and food insecurity will persist and drive far greater number of refugees to enter Sudan. Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) partners are planning for an additional 180,000 new arrivals throughout 2017, with an anticipated total of over 477,000 South Sudanese refugees in Sudan in need of protection and assistance by the end of 2017.

Access to populations of concern has improved over the past year. However, requirements to obtain travel permits to field locations continued in some areas to constrain the response. This has been particularly challenging as many South Sudanese refugees are entering or located in sensitive border areas. Furthermore, limited partners are present in response locations and the Sudanese authorities have required all implementation be carried out through local organizations. Finding suitable NGOs with the capacity to contribute to improving the quality of the response remains an ongoing challenge. The lack of consistent presence of international staff in the field to support national staff has at times impacted the capacity to deliver, monitor and coordinate the response. In East Darfur, UNHCR had limited presence and access for much of 2016 and worked closely with OCHA and other partners to coordinate the response.

The steady flow of South Sudanese refugees moving into Sudan has clearly not been without challenges. These include the geographical spread of refugees in Sudan, access permitted to the humanitarian response by the Government of Sudan, as well as general access constraints due for example to the rainy season; the facilitation of assistance (e.g. clearance of NFIs at ports); the mobility of refugees; concerns raised by host communities; congestion in sites due to lack of land; availability of donor funding; questions on the status of the South Sudanese in Sudan; and the need for semi-remote management among others, which have combined to make the response highly complex.

Within Sudan, UNHCR works under the UNHCR-led regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) for South Sudanese refugees. In close collaboration with relevant Government of Sudan entities at federal, state and local levels, UNHCR is coordinating the overall humanitarian response for South Sudanese refugees by partners under a mechanism called the Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF, or formerly the Refugee Multi-Sector/RMS). This forum is co-chaired by the Commission for Refugees (COR), Sudan's government body overseeing refugee affairs. The RCF coordination mechanism operates separately from the existing inter-agency framework established for the response to internally displaced people. The RMS (now RCF) was established in 2012, to ensure the requirements and response for refugees would be coordinated and presented in a dedicated forum and complementary with the IASC mechanisms. The RCF helps UNHCR and other humanitarian actors working in refugee operations to enhance complementarities leading to better protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees. The RCF regularly meets in Khartoum, and Refugee Working

Groups have been established in White Nile, South Kordofan (also covering West Kordofan), East, South and North Darfur states.

Prior to the establishment of the UNHCR-led Regional Response Plan (RRRP), UNHCR coordinated the Regional Inter-Agency Appeal for refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan with inputs from UNHCR partners who were working to respond to the needs of the “new” refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. This appeal sought funding to provide protection and assistance to an estimated 50,000 South Sudanese refugees throughout 2014 in White Nile, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, West Kordofan, North Kordofan, East Darfur, Sennar and Khartoum. The largest components of this appeal related to protection, food assistance, WASH and emergency shelter/NFI interventions.

The overall 2015 RRRP strategy was articulated around camp-based assistance for refugees living in relocation sites in WNS, as well as community-based programmes for those living in other settlements, including in Khartoum. In WNS, UNHCR and its partners continued to strive to guarantee access to WASH facilities, health care and education, in close cooperation with the relevant line ministries, whilst expanding targeted food security and livelihoods (FSL) support for the most vulnerable. In WNS, the identification and site planning of new camps was also required to decongest existing camps and provide new arrivals with adequate living conditions.

The 2016 RRRP planned to respond to the needs of South Sudanese refugees and host communities in Sudan through i) maintaining emergency response capacity to address new arrivals’ immediate needs in 2016; ii) stabilizing existing programmes by aiming to achieve at least minimum emergency standards across sectors, particularly by enhancing further integration in national response mechanisms; iii) ensuring effective protection of refugees and those at risk of statelessness, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including, children, youth, women at risk, and victims of gender-based violence; iv) developing interventions to strengthen refugees’ livelihood and self-reliance prospects in order to move to an assistance model better targeted to the specificities of this refugee group.

In 2017, the RRRP has continued along the same strategic lines, although the Plan was revised mid-way through 2017 in order to recalibrate the population planning figures due to a sizable increase in the number of refugees witnessed coming across the border in the first half of 2017.

A summary of additional key information from the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Regional Response Plans is provided below:

Time Period	Total population of South Sudanese in Sudan	RRRP Financial Requirements (USD)
January – December ‘14*	42,011	40,171,141
January – December ‘15	109,970	152,119,709
January – December ‘16	273,000	157,928,491

January – December '17	477,000	221,676,463
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*Inter-agency appeal for the South Sudanese Refugee Emergency

It is important to note that prior to September 2016, the South Sudanese in Sudan were treated as ‘brothers and sisters’, and not officially recognised as refugees by Sudan. As such, they fell under a general policy response of Sudan’s Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). On 1 September 2016, however, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between UNHCR and Sudan's Commission for Refugees (COR) as a framework which clarifies the status of South Sudanese arrivals as refugees and COR's role in coordinating the response on behalf of the Sudanese government.

Even with refugee status declared for the South Sudanese, UNHCR has been advocating for the continuation of the so-called Four Freedoms that the South Sudanese enjoy in principle in Sudan, including the freedom to move and work, enjoy residence and hold property. While there have been positive benefits accruing from the declaration of refugee status, the MoU also saw some new developments in the governmental response to the South Sudanese, including an increased request from the authorities for resources to support their capacity, as well as discussions on encampment and out-of-camp alternatives for the South Sudanese in places like Khartoum, which are important aspects of the overall response going forward.

Role, interests, participation and influence of stakeholders

During 2016 UNHCR Sudan and key supporting donors discussed the South Sudanese refugee response, bilaterally and in joint meetings, to examine specific areas of mutual concern. It was agreed that the response to date offered an opportunity to learn from lessons in WNS that may usefully inform other geographical areas where South Sudanese refugees are arriving in Sudan, and where a similar response has started. WNS remains one of the longest serving examples of the South Sudanese response in Sudan.

Role of the Government of Sudan

The Government of Sudan, through various bodies including the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) and the Commission for Refugees (COR), has been engaged in the South Sudanese refugee response since the outset, including over the full proposed period of the evaluation covering December 2013 – June 2017. The interest and influence of an array of governmental actors, including those with policy and security portfolios, have resulted in a complex set of roles and interests that have influenced decision-making around the response and its facilitation, including at both national/federal and state levels. The Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has largely acted at the early stages on behalf of the authorities in the response to the South Sudanese, who as a group have been accorded a different status at various points in time. Due to the varying status of the South Sudanese, there has been a complex relationship between the roles and interest of different actors, which also needs to be understood as the evaluation is undertaken as this will need to inform the identification of key informants. It is important to note that UNHCR’s key governmental counterpart is the Commission for Refugees (COR), however, until September 2016 the South Sudanese in Sudan were not officially considered refugees, thus limiting the role of COR in WNS during the period being reviewed. Post-September 2016, there has been a growing role of COR in WNS and a period of transition.

The proposed evaluation has not emanated from the authorities in Sudan and it is not intended for the evaluation to critically examine their role. However, it remains important to understand the complexity of the response and the central role of the authorities in shaping the management, policies and requirements that have influenced the scope of activities undertaken, delivery time, and other key aspects of the humanitarian response of agencies like UNHCR.

The authorities have:

- Maintained open borders to receive refugees;
- Organised the initial reception of refugees and facilitated site management arrangements;
- Issued access permits for humanitarian staff and partner agencies and approved technical agreements for agencies under the RRRP to work in WNS and support the response to new arrivals;
- Provided security arrangements for the sites;
- Provided, free of charge, the necessary land to expand sites and facilitated permissions with line ministries for certain activities;
- Led its own efforts to coordinate with the Refugee Multi- Sector (RMS), including under the RRRP, and the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan.

Role and interest of UNHCR, and partners

UNHCR's mandate is to assist and protect refugees, working collaboratively with states to achieve results. UNHCR is working under the umbrella of a Regional Refugee Response Plan for South Sudanese refugees. In Sudan, a refugee coordination model in mixed situations is used.

The agency:

- Leads coordination of the humanitarian response, with partners, under the umbrella of the refugee coordination model in mixed situations;
- Is provider of last resort for the life-saving provision and services required as part of the emergency refugee response, in support of the Sudanese authorities;
- Guides the country-specific response for refugees within the regional refugee response planning;
- Ensures the mainstreaming of protection considerations in UNHCR and partner programming for the response;
- Leads all-round advocacy on refugee needs with the authorities, with reference to its mandated role and Sudan's signature to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention;
- Works with partners in ensuring sectoral responses were adequately implemented and maintained, meeting minimum thresholds for the response.

UNHCR anticipates that the independent evaluation conclusions and recommendations will contribute to developing its strategic engagement in the ongoing response in Sudan, highlighting key lessons that can influence future ongoing activities and planning.

Role and interests of donors

Raising financial support for the South Sudanese response has been a struggle for UNHCR and other partners under the different appeal mechanisms in place since 2013, with an evident decrease in contributions since the initial emergency. The contributions provided have also at times been strictly earmarked, reducing the flexibility in the use of available funds, which has limited prioritisation options on occasion. Donors recognise the funding constraints on the response, whilst also facing greater scrutiny and accountability on the use of public funds in donor countries. Donors remain a key stakeholder in maintaining and developing the response, providing both valuable financial and advocacy support to ensure the protection and assistance of refugees. An independent evaluation will make a critical contribution towards UNHCR Sudan's accountability to its donors, also helping them to understand the complex challenges that underpin the strategic decisions and activities by UNHCR and its partners.

Role and interests of refugees

As part of UNHCR's overall accountability to refugees, an independent evaluation is critical to ensure that their rights are served in the best possible manner, with their protection and assistance at the centre of the response. Refugees have a critical voice and can help understand the impact of response activities on their lives, and identify areas of concern that require further improvement to enhance the enabling environment that upholds their protection, safety, and dignity. There may be practical limitations on the extent to which refugees can be consulted in the course of this evaluation, though UNHCR does expect participatory approaches to be used where it is feasible to do so.

III. Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

UNHCR Sudan is commissioning this evaluation for both accountability and learning purposes, with emphasis on generating lessons learnt to support improvements to the ongoing refugee response in WNS which may also be applied to the wider refugee response in other parts of Sudan. The broad objective of this evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the UNHCR-led response to South Sudanese refugees who have fled to WNS. To date over 160,000 refugees have arrived in the border state of WNS, making it broadly relevant to the wider humanitarian response to the South Sudanese in Sudan. WNS hosts some 40% of the South Sudanese refugees in Sudan.

The evaluation aims to assess the extent to which protection, including assistance needs of refugees, have been met and to gauge the degree to which timely operational adjustments or revisions in strategic direction or coordination mechanisms have been made since the beginning of the crisis to meet the emerging needs of the refugee population. It should also seek to identify and document good practice - as well as highlight challenges and constraints - in order to strengthen the ongoing response in WNS and to provide guidance for the wider refugee response in other parts of Sudan.

The evaluation is intended to provide insights for the field operations, the Regional Bureau for Africa and other concerned Divisions/Services on the status of the refugee response to date and to agree upon recommendations for future action. The evaluation will be

participatory and collaborative in approach with an emphasis on learning opportunities to inform future emergency strategy, coordination, programme design, management and implementation.

The primary users of the evaluation will be the key UNHCR stakeholders in the response, particularly managers involved in the field response. Other UNHCR users will be the Regional Bureau for Africa, the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS), Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM), the Division of International Protection (DIP), Department of Information Systems and Telecoms (DIST), the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) and the Division of Financial and Administration Management (DFAM). Also, for donor resource mobilisation, the Division of External Relations.

IV. Evaluation Scope

This evaluation will cover the UNHCR and partner refugee response across eight sites in WNS and host communities between December 2013 and June 2017. In addition to assessing the overall effectiveness of the response, the evaluation will focus in particular on strategy, coordination, management and operational arrangements – with emphasis on the semi-remote management context – quality assurance (including capacity building), protection and the WASH, public health and nutrition sectors. The evaluation is intended to generate lessons learnt and recommendations that will support improved coordination and contingency planning, and that will contribute to strengthening the quality of the response to the South Sudanese refugee influx. Evaluation results may also help inform strategic direction for the wider UNHCR and partner response for South Sudanese refugees across Sudan as it evolves in 2017 and beyond.

V. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Recognizing the ongoing and evolving nature of the refugee response operation in WNS, the evaluation should seek to draw evidence-informed conclusions which emphasise the established evaluation criteria of appropriateness/relevance, effectiveness, coordination, connectedness and coverage⁹⁰. The evaluation will focus on a number of key evaluation questions and sub-questions, to be refined and finalised during the inception phase.

Key Evaluation Question 1: To what extent are UNHCR and partner strategies and objectives (as articulated in the country operations plan and in the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Sudan chapters of the South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plans) for the refugee response relevant and appropriate, taking into account the operational environment and evolving context.

Possible sub-questions:

- 1.1 To what extent does the Sudan chapter of the Regional Response Plan represent a clearly articulated strategy for the response?

⁹⁰ ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies: Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria, 2006.

- 1.2 Are UNHCR and partner strategies and objectives sufficiently tailored to the specific needs and priorities of Persons of Concern (PoC), particularly women and children?
- 1.3 To what extent have UNHCR and partner strategies involved participation, community-based approaches, awareness raising, and how has the inclusion or omission of these approaches contributed to the relevance and appropriateness of the strategic approach undertaken?
- 1.4 To what extent have the design of UNHCR and the UNHCR-led RRRP strategies and objectives been based on timely needs assessments?

Key Evaluation Question 2: To what extent have UNHCR and partners (as articulated in the country operations plan and in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Sudan chapters of the South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plans) achieved expected results, highlighting key contributing and constraining factors?

Possible sub-questions:

- 2.1 What implications has the semi-remote management context had on the refugee response?
- 2.2 How measurable has the response been, and what constraining or other factors influenced the level of data available?
- 2.3 What have been the intended and unintended results of the response for refugee women, men, girls and boys?
- 2.4 How effectively has UNHCR ensured adherence to relevant and established technical quality standards – particularly in the WASH, public health and nutrition sectors – across the refugee response?
- 2.5 Has UNHCR provided timely, adequate and appropriate staffing, logistical and financial resources to achieve intended results?
- 2.6 What have been the key contributing or constraining factors influencing the overall effectiveness of the refugee response?

Key Evaluation Questions 3: How well has UNHCR exercised its refugee response coordination responsibilities?

Possible sub-questions:

- 3.1 How effectively has UNHCR's coordination role in the refugee response promoted synergies with concerned actors, avoiding gaps and duplication?
- 3.2 To what extent have UNHCR and partners, through the Refugee Consultation Forum (previously, Refugee Multi- Sector (RMS)), established and agreed harmonised approaches and common standards for the refugee response?
- 3.3 To what extent have appropriate partners (including national and local stakeholders) been identified and mobilised to assist the response effort?
- 3.4 How effectively has UNHCR identified and addressed partner capacity gaps and needs?

- 3.5 How well has UNHCR and partners, through the Refugee Consultation Forum (previously, Refugee Multi- Sector (RMS)), coordinated at the national level, at the WNS level, and internally between the national and WNS levels?

Key Evaluation Question 4: To what extent have medium and longer-term objectives and solutions been given due consideration in planning and decision-making processes?

Possible sub-questions:

- 4.1 To what extent have medium and longer-term considerations been reflected in prioritisation, design of strategy and implementation of activities?
- 4.2 What have been the key contributing and constraining factors to UNHCR pursuing and delivering on its 'Alternative to Camps' policy, and livelihoods strategy?

Key Evaluation Question 5: To what extent have UNHCR-led protection and assistance interventions reached all intended Persons of Concern?

Possible sub-questions:

- 5.1 To what extent has the refugee response been accountable to affected people?
- 5.2 How effectively have UNHCR Sudan's AGD and participatory assessments been implemented, and were there any constraining factors in introducing its mechanisms, or tools?
- 5.3 Were there any coverage gaps in terms of ethnicity, location, gender or age group? If yes, what were the key internal and external factors contributing to the gap(s)?
- 5.4 To what extent has the level of assistance provided been proportional to identified needs? Did this affect the quality of the protection response for any one particular group?

VI. Methodology

UNHCR welcomes the use of diverse and innovative evaluation methods. The evaluation is expected to employ a robust mixed-method approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods, including analysis of monitoring data where available. Qualitative methods should include observation, interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) with a range of key stakeholders including UNHCR staff at Headquarters and country-level, partner agency staff, NGOs, donors, national authorities and affected populations - and should consistently reflect Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) considerations. Data from a wide range of sources (e.g. assessment reports, coordination group minutes, 3W matrices, HIS data, 'Focus' narrative, budgetary and indicator data) will need to be triangulated and cross-validated so as to ensure the credibility of evaluation findings and conclusions.

The evaluation will draw upon information and analysis collected from a wide range of sources and a representative range of stakeholders. Given the formative nature of this evaluation, it should take into account background material such as the Joint Assessment Missions (JAM) completed by UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) in November 2016. The UNHCR Evaluation Manager will ensure that the Evaluation Team has access to relevant documents and personnel and will assist in the organization of field missions.

The Evaluation Team will be expected to refine the methodology and evaluation questions following the initial desk review and key informant interviews during the inception phase. The final inception report will specify the evaluation methodology, the refined focus and scope of the evaluation, including the evaluation questions, the sampling strategy and the data collection instruments.

The Sudan context may pose some limitations, and the evaluation will depend on the support of the authorities to process visas for consultants, grant timely travel permits, and facilitate access to camps and the South Sudanese refugee population in WNS. In addition, although a number of key stakeholder agency staff may have rotated or departed Sudan, it will be important to capture their views as they may provide valuable insights to help interpret events and decision-making over the evaluation period.

The Evaluation Team will be required to sign the UNHCR Code of Conduct, complete UNHCR's introductory protection training module, and respect UNHCR's confidentiality requirements. In line with established standards for evaluation in the UN system, the Code of Conduct for evaluation in the UN system, and the UN Ethical Guidelines for evaluations, evaluation in UNHCR is founded on the fundamental principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility. These inter-connected principles subsume a number of specific norms that will guide the commissioning, conducting and supporting the use of the evaluation. This includes protecting sources and data, informed consent, respect for dignity and diversity and the minimisation of risk, harm and burden upon those who are the subject of or participating in the evaluation, while at the same time not compromising the integrity of the evaluation. This evaluation is also expected to adhere to UNHCR pilot 'Evaluation Quality Assurance' guidance, which will be overseen by the UNHCR Evaluation Manager with support from the UNHCR Evaluation Service.

VII. Evaluation Work Plan and Deliverables

The evaluation should be completed within four months from January 2018 to April 2018, with an anticipated 1-month inception phase, 2-month data collection and analysis phase, and 1-month report writing and finalisation phase. The key deliverables include an inception report, data collection toolkit (including questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussion guides, analytical framework, etc.), and a final evaluation report, including recommendations and executive summary. An indicative timeline is outlined below:

Activity	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
ToR finalised		November 2017
Call for proposals issued		November 2017
Selection process (bids evaluated, tender awarded)		December 2017
Inception phase - initial desk review and key informant interviews	Final inception report (including methodology, final evaluation questions and evaluation matrix)	January/February 2018
In-country data collection and preliminary analysis	Presentation of preliminary findings and conclusions at stakeholder workshops	February/March 2018
Drafting of final report and executive summary	Draft report and recommendations (for circulation and comments)	March/April 2018
Finalisation of Evaluation Report	Final Evaluation Report (including recommendations and executive summary)	April 2018

The inception phase will also focus on refining the evaluation questions, defining methods, and detailing the data collection and analysis plan. The inception report should elaborate a detailed plan for the conduct of the evaluation, and provide an opportunity for the Evaluation Team to clarify any issues or ambiguities arising from the TOR. The inception report should include:

- a) A preliminary analysis of the context, intervention and stakeholders.
- b) Detailed evaluation methodology, including, if necessary, sampling strategy and qualitative comparative methods and any quantitative methods.
- c) A refined set of evaluation questions, if necessary.
- d) An evaluation matrix, setting out how each of the evaluation questions will be answered (criteria, proposed methods and data sources).
- e) A detailed schedule of activities and deliverables, designating roles and responsibilities.

The primary output of the project will be the final evaluation report, the conclusions and recommendations of which will feed into UNHCR Sudan operational response and strategic development.

UNHCR Sudan will convene and chair an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) that will guide the evaluation process following the initial tendering process. The ERG may provide substantive and technical feedback on drafts of the inception and final reports, and ensure

that evaluation conclusions and recommendations are effectively disseminated. The ERG will be comprised of selected participants from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including representatives of UNHCR Sudan (Representative or alternate) and its Coordinator for the South Sudan situation response in Sudan, other UN agencies, and the NGO community that are active UNHCR partners within the Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF), based on interest and willingness to participate in the group. In addition, an invitation will be made to a representative from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) in Khartoum to participate as a member of the ERG.

In line with good evaluation practice, effective mechanisms are required to ensure that UNHCR's investment in this evaluation, and the recommendations deriving from it, will lead to improvements in the quality and impact of the organization's work. As such, a formal management response will be required within two months of publication of the final report.