



# UN STOCKTAKING EVENT MAY 2021

June 2021

The stocktaking event on the United Nations (UN) and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) pledges, co-convened by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) gathered 12 UN entities, 16 speakers and 100 participants on a virtual platform. It provided the opportunity to review progress on two key pledges made at the December 2019 Global Refugee Forum: the ‘common UN pledge’ by the Secretary-General, and the ‘IASC pledge’ made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Both pledges commit the UN entities to consider refugees in their own analyses and plans, and to advocate with Host Governments to facilitate refugees’ inclusion in national systems.

## UN Common Pledge

We stand by refugees and will work with governments to include refugees and returnees in relevant development programmes.

We will advocate for refugees and returnees to have access to national services in countries of origin, countries of transit and refugee-hosting countries.

We will advocate for the inclusion of refugees and returnees in regional frameworks and national development plans and reviews, as well as the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. We will work to provide technical, financial and programming support to host countries for this purpose.

## IASC Pledge

The IASC agencies will work with UNHCR and host Governments to ensure that all our analysis, policies and response plans integrate the need of refugees and displaced people.

We pledge to systematically consider how to allocate technical, financial and programming support to host countries in line with the GCR and SDG pledge of Leaving No One Behind.

The IASC member agencies commit to work with UNHCR to support refugees and host governments, to put the needs of refugees and returnees at the centre of humanitarian and development.

At the event, the Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at UNHCR, Ms. Gillian Triggs, emphasized on the importance to come together as a UN family to deliver on the pledges and advance refugee needs and inclusion.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator a.i. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham outlined the progress made to support refugees in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and the need to improve coordination in ‘mixed response settings’ and between humanitarian and development organisations to promote dignity and self-sufficiency for refugees. The Assistant Secretary-General of the UN Development Coordination Office, Mr. Robert Piper, underlined the role of the UN development system in securing the inclusion of refugees in national systems, in line with the SDGs commitment to ‘leave no one behind’.

UNHCR on behalf of the co-convenors presented **data from a desk review** on the inclusion of refugees in 19 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), 52 COVID-19 Socio Economic Response Plans (SERPs), 56 Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs) and 59 Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs).

The data showed that:

- Since the pledges in December 2019, 89 per cent of UNSDCFs in refugee hosting countries mention refugees in their outcome statements and 79 per cent mention refugees in their results frameworks. This is up from 60 per cent mentioning refugees in either way prior to the pledges.
- Out of 52 Socioeconomic Response Plans for COVID-19 developed in 2020 in refugee hosting countries, 98 per cent mentioned refugees and 88 per cent did so in their Strategic Pillars, almost always listing refugees as one of the most vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic.
- Over the period 2018 – 2021 (March), the level of inclusion of refugees in humanitarian analysis and response planning tools has been consistently high. While inclusion of refugee needs in analysis and response plans was already high, following the pledge all HNOs in refugee hosting countries have included an analysis of refugee needs and 76 per cent of HRPs have included a dedicated chapter on refugees.

This was followed by three **'mini panels'**, each consisting of 4 speakers from within the UN family. Allotted 2 minutes each, they raised the following issues:

## What works

(UNICEF, UNDP, UNV, IOM)

- Joint efforts between UN agencies to include refugees in national services have shown progress, - particularly in the areas of education and access to water for refugee children.
- Tailored programmes and approaches that are specific to national contexts and are aligned with local strategies have been successful to implement pledges.
- Solid partnerships that consider refugees as active actors of change i.e. engaging with refugees' skills, have created a win-win situation for host communities and refugees themselves.
- Flexible donor funding to UN and partner agencies allows for a quicker/more effective/better response to fast-changing needs on the ground.
- Pragmatic approaches when assessing needs and providing assistance have worked well; multiple pre-assessments of each beneficiary have proven to be difficult for staff and exhausting for beneficiaries.
- Prepare and take care of UN staff before assisting others when responding to pandemics and crises.

## Challenges

(UNFPA, UN-Habitat, ITU, WFP)

- Refugees are often hosted in marginalised and underserved areas, and at times the international response in camps exceeds the standards of local services.
- In some contexts, refugees are subjected to internal politics, making it harder for the UN to provide assistance.
- Effective engagement between UN humanitarian staff and municipal governments and budgets remains a challenge.
- It remains challenging to facilitate technical and financial support to host cities, municipalities and communities as funding often gets 'stuck' in the capital.
- We should engage refugees to support peace and stability as part of the humanitarian-development-peace collaboration.

- Connectivity in poor urban and refugee hosting areas has been deprioritised by some governments where budgets are tight despite being considered basic infrastructure.
- There has been slow progress towards enhancing refugee's self-reliance and livelihoods – with many efforts on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Protracted conflicts and insecurity have been major impediments to humanitarian access making it hard to promote refugee inclusion.
- Global and national reprioritisation of resources as a result of the pandemic have led to limitations in the extent and type of programming which agencies can undertake in support of refugees.

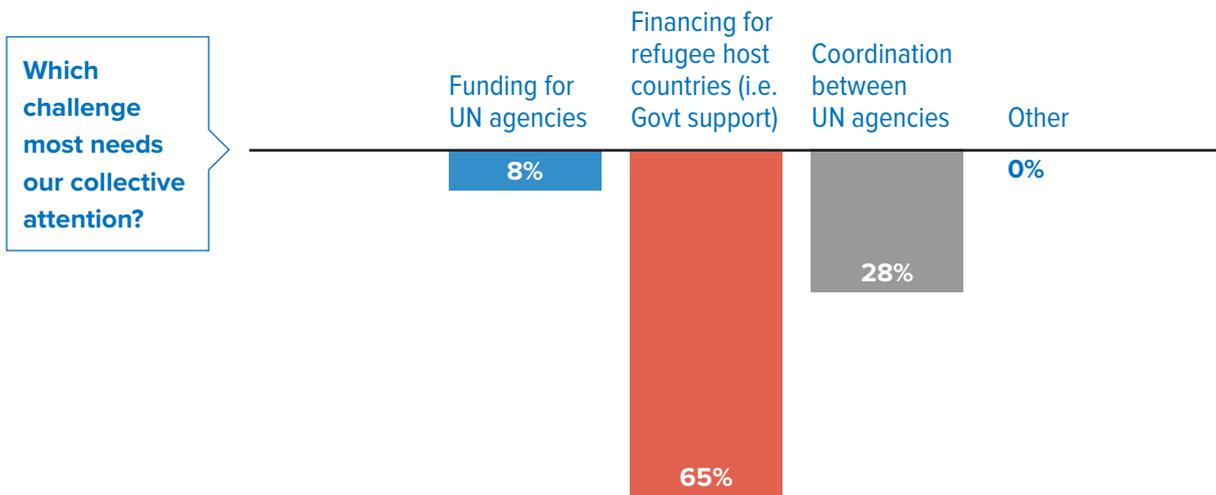
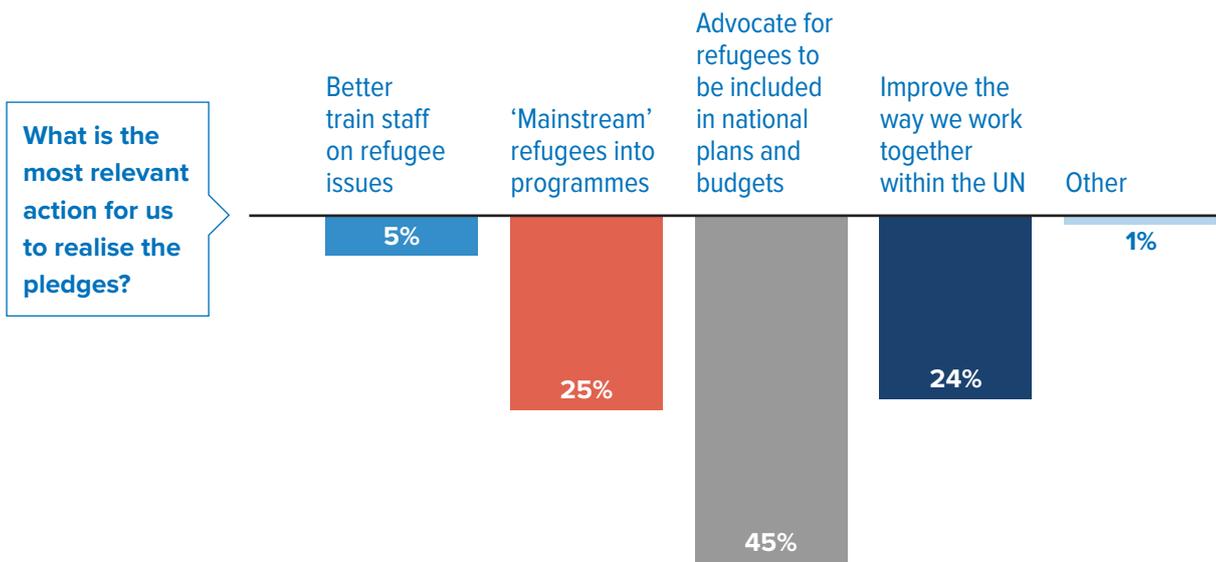
## Looking forward to 2023

(FAO, SRSG on Violence Against Children, ILO, UN Women)

### United Nations organizations should:

- Avoid building stand-alone initiatives for refugees, and rather build them into ongoing programming and advocacy.
- Include refugee voices in all humanitarian, development and peace-related work, rather than treating refugees as passive aid recipients.
- As 'building back better' starts, integrate a human-rights, child-sensitive and inclusive approach into all UN work (globally, 42 per cent of refugees are children).
- Break down programmatic silos in the development, humanitarian, peace, human rights pillars, and build joint approaches.
- Mobilize strategic stakeholders at national, regional and global level to push forward with the implementation of the pledges, linking them to the SDGs.
- Continue working towards socio-economic integration and equal treatment of refugees through decent work and appropriate salaries.
- Build strategic partnerships with NGOs and private sector to respond with innovative approaches in trainings and educational programmes.
- Leverage the leadership of Resident Coordinators to share a unified UN message on refugees and work with Governments in the prioritisation and implementation of plans to include refugees.

**Audience polls** elicited the following views on key points:



**Looking towards the next round of pledges in 2023**, participants responded that key areas to focus on include: livelihoods and self-reliance; digital education and infrastructure for refugees and host communities; community-based approaches; climate action; mixed response settings; support to refugee women in decision making positions; move forward with refugee protection even when financial resources are limited; better matching of pledges and funding; and predictable and flexible donor funding.

The **key conclusions** of the discussion were:

**1. There has been positive progress in refugee inclusion in UN humanitarian and development plans**, such as the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and Socio-Economic responses plans to COVID-19 (SERPs).

**2. Individual UN entities are committed to deliver on the pledges, and are doing so.** Many have extended their programmes, leveraged their strengths and formed new partnerships to bring together complementary expertise in order to better reach and serve refugees. Some UN entities have specific programmes to promote the inclusion of refugees and improve their access to basic social services and decent work; others have adjusted their policies and processes to ensure the inclusion of refugees in their plans, programming and advocacy.

**3. At the same time agencies agree there is room for improvement. The UN family can and must work closely together under the Government's leadership using the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach**, to consistently push for and support refugees to be included in national and municipal budgets, datasets, plans and service delivery systems; and for their contribution to be realised and recognised.

**The co-convenors agreed on the following actions:**

- Develop a report on progress against the common UN pledge and IASC pledge to launch in the run-up to the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021.
- Establish mechanisms to continue tracking progress against these pledges and synthesise common thinking in relation to the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and pledges.

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