



Meaningful engagement: Enhancing inclusive participation in UNHCR work

Age, Gender and Diversity
Accountability Report
2023



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Division of International Protection

Cover photo: Excitement lights up Mina Raya Camp in Aceh, Indonesia, as Rohingya refugee children enthusiastically join a class led by a volunteer teacher.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Amanda Jufrian

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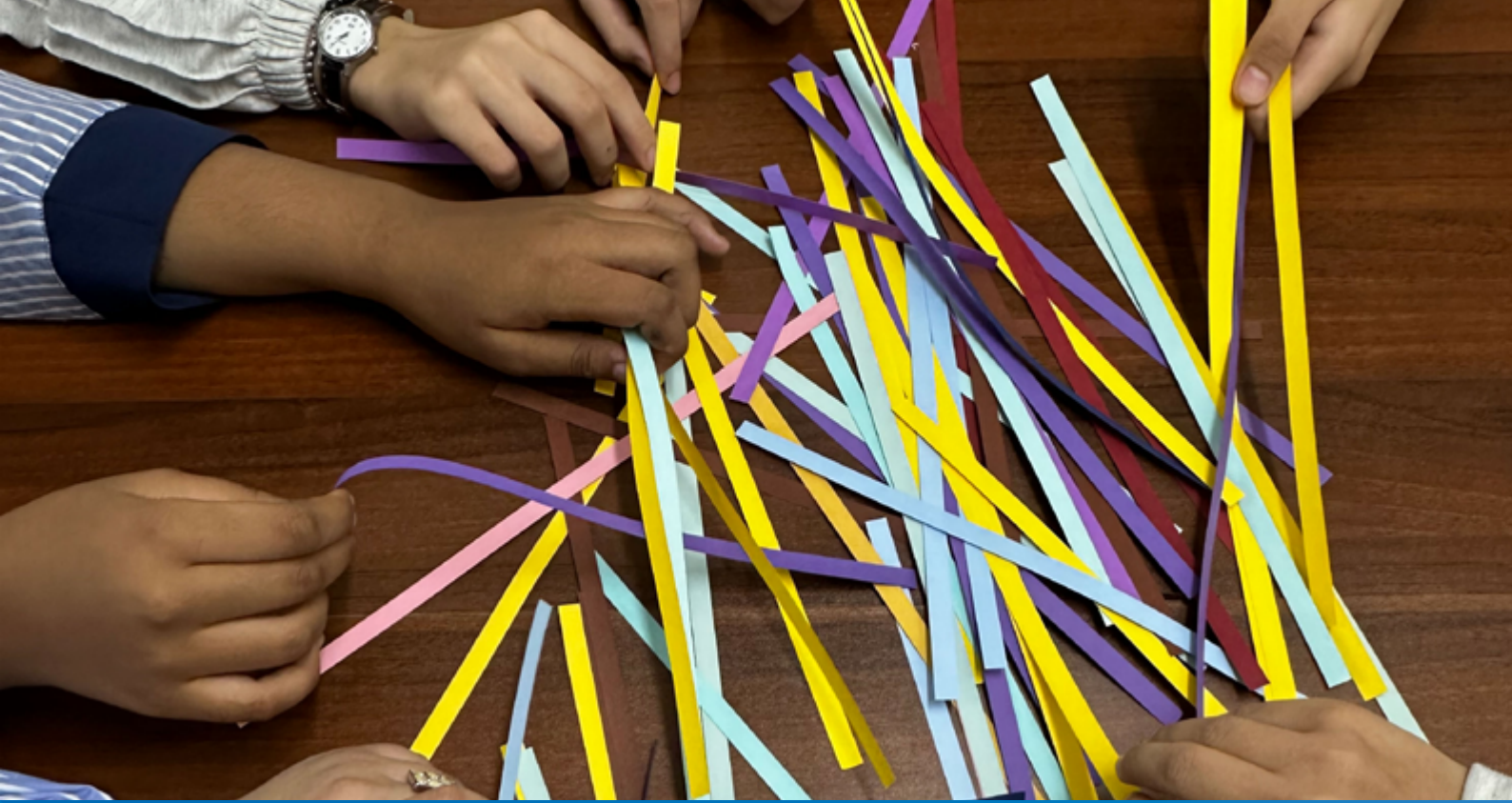
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List of acronyms

Acronym	Meaning	Acronym	Meaning
AAP	Accountability to Affected People	NFI	Non-Food Item
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
AI	Artificial Intelligence	proGres	Profile Global Registration System
CBI	Cash-Based Intervention	PRIMES	Population Registration and Identity Management Ecosystem
CBO	Community-Based Organization	PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CBP	Community-Based Protection	RLIF	Refugee-Led Innovation Fund
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (Deutsche Akademische Flüchtlingsinitiative Albert Einstein)	RLO	Refugee-Led Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	RSD	Refugee Status Determination
FRM	Feedback and Response Mechanism	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
GRF	Global Refugee Forum	SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics
GRYN	Global Refugee Youth Network	UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
GYAC	Global Youth Advisory Council	UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IDA	International Disability Alliance	UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of women
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
MENA	Middle East and North Africa	WFP	World Food Programme
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support	Youth2030	United Nations 2030 Youth Strategy
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network		
NARE	Needs Assessment for Refugee Emergencies		



Executive summary

Egypt. Refugee children learn and heal through art therapy at this community centre run by a UNHCR partner in Alexandria. © UNHCR

Overview

The [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#) (hereafter the “AGD policy”), issued in 2018 and extended in 2023, consolidates and updates UNHCR commitments to AGD-inclusive programming, [Accountability to Affected People](#) (AAP) and gender equality. These commitments complement and build on one another. The AGD policy highlights core actions that are mandatory for all UNHCR operations in all contexts.

The Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Accountability Report 2023 (hereafter the “report”) presents the progress UNHCR has made in several areas of its work on the core actions identified in the AGD policy, also considering the recommendations of the [Longitudinal Evaluation of UNHCR’s AGD Policy](#), which was finalized at the end of 2023.

The “Organizational accountability section” of the report includes updates on [diversity, equity and inclusion](#) and [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) (PSEA); a summary of the final recommendations from the longitudinal evaluation; highlights from UNHCR’s [Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network \(MOPAN\) Assessment Report](#); and an assessment of the organization’s progress towards the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality ([UN-SWAP](#)) framework, disability inclusion ([United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy \[UNDIS\]](#)) and youth ([United Nations 2030 Youth Strategy](#)).

The report reflects on AGD-related efforts at the [2023 Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) and, in the Spotlight sections, looks at UNHCR interventions with and for various groups, including youth, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) persons, minorities and indigenous peoples.

The report is based on a comprehensive analysis of annual results for 2023, official population statistics and [COMPASS](#) core indicators serving as a baseline for 2024. Direct feedback gathered through consultations with UNHCR staff members at UNHCR headquarters, regional, country and field offices are integrated throughout the report.

Progress on the Age, Gender and Diversity policy core actions

Age-, gender- and diversity-inclusive programming

UNHCR continued to improve its use of qualitative and quantitative data disaggregated by age, sex and diverse characteristics (AGD dimensions) to plan, implement and report on programmes addressing the diverse needs of displaced and stateless persons. UNHCR official [population statistics](#)¹ show that as of year-end 2023, 74 per cent of 179 countries had gathered data disaggregated by age, sex and nationality for at least one of the population groups that UNHCR protects and/or assists, while in 31 per cent of these countries, UNHCR had gathered data disaggregated by age, sex and nationality for all the population groups. The availability of data varies by population group; disaggregation is highest for refugees and internally displaced persons and lowest for asylum-seekers, returnees (whether internally displaced persons or refugees) and stateless persons.

The UNHCR results-based management system [COMPASS](#) has supported ongoing efforts to incorporate the needs and priorities of diverse AGD groups across programming. The UNHCR gender marker was used in 81 country operations and the disability marker in 70 country operations. An analysis of annual country reports for 2023 shows that at least 72 per cent of country operations have incorporated disability inclusion into programming (against 68 per cent in 2022). Sixty-three per cent of country operations reported activities that incorporated the needs of forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ persons. Disaggregated data on activities for older persons was provided by 13 per cent of country operations. Out of 126 reporting countries, 76 per cent had child protection services available to displaced and stateless children. Thirty-one country operations incorporated direct programming on youth engagement in their strategy for 2024.

Accountability to Affected People

Participation and inclusion

The AGD policy guides UNHCR efforts to increase the meaningful participation and inclusion of displaced and stateless persons in all programming phases. The new organization-wide core indicator, “Extent participation of displaced and stateless persons across programme phases is supported”, was reported on by **39 country operations**. Of these 39, 25 (64 per cent) reported that UNHCR supported the participation of refugees and asylum-seekers in an “extensive” manner. For internally displaced persons, 14 country operations reported data, with 10 countries (71 per cent) identifying “extensive” support. In 2023, **76 country operations reported having conducted participatory assessments** (compared to 72 in 2022). Tools developed or updated in 2023 that enhance participation and inclusion in assessment include the [UNHCR-WFP Joint Analytical Framework](#), developed jointly with the World Food Programme, and the updated [Needs Assessment for Refugee Emergencies \(NARE\) Analytical Framework](#). The updated [NARE checklist](#) is designed to assist in multisectoral assessments during a sudden influx of displaced persons. It can be used to gather information on community structures and basic needs, including through direct consultations with communities, to guide food security, cash-based and livelihood interventions.

Through innovative mechanisms such as the [Grant Agreement](#) or the [Refugee-Led Innovation Fund](#), grants were channelled to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in 35 countries where UNHCR operates. Displaced persons’ participation in the UNHCR monitoring and evaluation process remains limited, and further investment is needed to increase it.

Communication and transparency

UNHCR enhanced information provision and communication by using multiple channels for mass messaging (posters, notice boards, virtual newsletters, SMS text messages, community volunteers) and leveraging digital tools in the communities’ native languages. The number of [UNHCR Help websites](#) increased from 104 in 2022 to **136 active Help sites at the end of 2023, reaching over 13 million people in 32 languages**. To ensure that information is accessible

¹ UNHCR collects official population statistics for the 132 countries in which it has operations but also for other countries. In 2023, it collected official population statistics on forcibly displaced and stateless persons in 179 countries.

to displaced and stateless persons with diverse language backgrounds, several HELP sites included information in multiple languages. Notably, the [Brazil](#), [Greece](#) and [Poland](#) Help websites each translated their content into 8 to 10 languages. Information was also provided through two-way communication channels that enabled users to engage with UNHCR. These included 16 live WhatsApp lines in 15 country operations, which attracted 75,000 new users, and multiple contact centres run by UNHCR or partners, or managed at inter-agency level. The Panama regional contact centre was set up in 2023 to support the [Safe Mobility Offices](#), covering Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Guatemala. Other social media channels, such as Telegram and Facebook, were used to share information on rights, procedures, assistance and services provided by UNHCR and its partners. These channels were chosen based on feedback from displaced and stateless persons on their preferred communication methods and channels. Non-digital channels such as in-person field visits, help desks, mobile information caravans and community volunteers continued to help UNHCR reach forcibly displaced and stateless persons across several operations.

Feedback and response

Feedback and Response Mechanisms (FRMs) established in consultation with forcibly displaced persons were in place in 67 per cent of reporting country operations (compared to 69 per cent in 2022). Safe online feedback mechanisms were available through UNHCR Help sites in 27 countries. UNHCR conducted in-depth mapping and analysis of FRMs in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, in Southern Africa, and in the Asia and Pacific region. The mapping evaluated the available standard operating procedures and tools used to collect, record, refer, respond to and analyse community feedback, which informs programming. UNHCR often revised FRM tools in response to prompting and feedback from communities, who reported their preferred communication channels for securely submitting complaints and receiving responses.

In several country operations, FRM channels were digitalized to support data analysis and response to complaints. However, other operations reported that budget cuts had hindered the use and development of FRM tools. UNHCR co-led the work to develop [collective accountability and feedback mechanisms](#) as part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force 2 on AAP, resulting in the establishment of IASC standards for collective feedback mechanisms and a common taxonomy to categorize and better analyse the nature of the feedback. These standards should help humanitarian actors align on feedback collection, sharing, analysis and response. They are currently being piloted in Burundi, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Organizational learning and adaptation

UNHCR continued to adapt its communication, programming, country and regional strategies, and methods of delivering assistance based on recommendations from forcibly displaced and stateless persons. This included increasing its use of digital technology. Initiatives aligned with the UNHCR [Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2026](#), such as the launch of the **Safe Mobility Portals (Movilidad Segura)**, were instrumental in expanding digitalized services for asylum-seekers and refugees. The strategy's main aims are to facilitate information-sharing, enhance asylum-seekers and refugees' agency in processes such as registration, increase their ownership of and control over their personal data, and improve interaction and feedback between them and UNHCR. These experiences and forward thinking, in which UNHCR started to systematically invest in 2023, are now informing UNHCR's work in developing an organizational solution for digital services, the **Digital Gateway**.

The [Ethical Communication Guidelines](#) were developed based on feedback from forcibly displaced persons to ensure all UNHCR communications adhere to its stated principles and are “in line with the choices, preferences and expectations of the people at the heart of the stories”.

[Post-Distribution Monitoring for Cash-Based Interventions \(CBIs\)](#) surveyed 31,524 households in 73 countries. The results showed that cash was the preferred form of assistance, with only 4 per cent of the households stating a preference for in-kind assistance, thus confirming the “Why not Cash” underpinning approach of the [2022–2026 UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions](#).

Advancing gender equality

Gender equality remained a focus for UNHCR in 2023, in line with the organization's Strategic Directions, and was included in various sectoral interventions. A UNHCR 2023 report, [Gender Equality: Promising and Emerging Practices](#), showcased innovative approaches for increasing women and girls' participation and empowerment through digital inclusion, and enhanced livelihoods opportunities, engagement in planning and feedback through women's committees and self-help groups.

UNHCR also **partnered with several women-led organizations**: of the organizations it funded in 2023, 21 per cent categorized themselves as women-led on the UN Partner Portal, with 7 per cent led by forcibly displaced and stateless women.

Women and girls' participation and inclusion was strengthened by increasing their representation in community structures and UNHCR support for women-led organizations. In 40 per cent of reporting UNHCR country operations, over half of the forcibly displaced and stateless persons in community leadership and management structures were women.

UNHCR continues to promote gender equality in **individual registration and documentation** through its registration tools and its monitoring of countries' progress on ending statelessness. Of the people newly registered in the Profile Global Registration System (proGres) and issued with individual documentation, 54 per cent were women. The progress made by States on granting women equal rights to pass their nationality to their children continued to be detailed and analysed in the [Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2024](#).

Efforts were made to ensure **women's equal access to and control over assistance**, including increasing their participation in cash and in-kind assistance programmes. As a result, in 2023, 54 per cent of all cash recipients were women, up from 51 per cent in 2022. Additionally, the post-distribution monitoring report for CBI was expanded to include questions to assess the specific impact of this intervention on women and girls.

Equal access to livelihoods, health and education for women and girls continues to be an area requiring targeted support. Women and girls' equal access to higher education opportunities was encouraged through the [Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative \(DAFI\)](#), under which 42 per cent of recipients were women (in line with 2022). Of all health consultations conducted by UNHCR and its partners, 58 per cent were with women and girls (57 per cent in 2022). UNHCR and its partners adapted livelihood interventions to integrate gender considerations; as a result, 53 per cent of recipients of livelihood support were women. Challenges in this area remain, particularly for single heads of households, as reflected in the UNHCR-World Bank report on the [Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement](#) and the UNHCR [Global Survey on Livelihoods](#).

In line with the [UN-SWAP](#), UNHCR set up a Global Gender Focal Points Network across its operations to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and skills among UNHCR staff on gender-sensitive programming.

In line with the [UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence](#), the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) response was strengthened by enhancing the survivor-centred approach and accountability to women and girls. GBV response services were available to survivors in 72 per cent of 122 country operations (in line with 2022). Sixteen country operations implemented prevention programming, using various approaches: [SASA!](#) and [Girl Shine](#), which have a focus on adolescent girls' empowerment, and [Engaging Men through Accountable Practice to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls](#).

Organizational accountability

In 2023, UNHCR continued to develop its diversity, equity and inclusion framework. Internally, it continued to track progress on gender, race and disability inclusion in the UNHCR workforce, noting an improvement in gender parity in some regions.

UNHCR underwent its fourth [MOPAN assessment](#),² covering the period from January 2018 to August 2023. This study assessed whether UNHCR was fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving global context. It recognized that the UNHCR AGD policy had a positive influence on advancements in gender equality. However, it also found that further work was needed to improve the quality and quantity of gender-disaggregated data and to increase staff awareness of the AGD policy, and that UNHCR evaluations need to better incorporate the gender dimension.

UNHCR strengthened efforts to prevent, mitigate the risks of, and respond to sexual misconduct, culminating in an updated UNHCR [2023–2025 Strategy and Action Plan for Tackling Sexual Misconduct](#). As part of its work to strengthen partner capacity for **PSEA**, UNHCR assessed the PSEA capacity of 89 per cent of partner Non-Governmental Organizations, finding that 56 per cent had reached full capacity.

UNHCR kept up its efforts to meet the goals of accountability frameworks for the [UN-SWAP](#), [UNDIS](#) and the United Nations 2030 Youth Strategy ([Youth2030](#)). For UN-SWAP, UNHCR met or exceeded the requirements for 15 of the 17 applicable performance indicators, up from 14 in 2022. For UNDIS and Youth2030, UNHCR accountability framework scores remained similar to those reported in 2022.

The final recommendations of the [Longitudinal Evaluation of UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\) Policy](#) were presented to UNHCR in the second half of 2023, after a co-creation workshop in which various UNHCR divisions, entities and regional bureaux participated. The recommendations were: to strengthen action by leadership and management to implement the AGD policy as a unified approach across all sectors of work; to take a stronger intersectional approach to disaggregated data analysis to improve AGD-informed programming; to continue to invest in innovative mechanisms for AAP; to strengthen partnerships with external actors on AGD policy commitments; and to build on lessons learned to ensure the AGD policy is adequately resourced. The results of the evaluation are being shared with UNHCR staff at multiple levels, and the UNHCR management response will guide the organization’s next steps in implementing the AGD policy.

Ways forward

The following recommendations are based on several conclusions of the evaluation of the AGD Policy and the progress detailed in this report. They outline actions that UNHCR could take at multiple levels to further the systematic application of its AGD policy in 2024 and beyond. Additional details and actions for implementing these recommendations are outlined in the “[Ways forward](#)” section at the end of this report.

- I. Increase staff awareness and uptake of the AGD policy across all levels of the organization, ensuring it is consistently understood, communicated and integrated into all aspects of UNHCR work.
- II. Enhance the integration of AGD-disaggregated data into UNHCR population statistics, assessments and COMPASS results indicators, to improve analysis, inform programming and decision-making, and enhance external reporting.
- III. Strengthen participation and inclusion, promote innovative ways to enhance the agency of forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and ensure they are able to engage meaningfully in all stages of the operation management cycle.
- IV. Continue to invest in responding to the multiple protection risks and needs of women and girls, and in initiatives that promote gender equality, including through increased cooperation with and support to women-led organizations, in line with UNHCR Strategic Directions, core UNHCR policies and the overall United Nations system-wide commitments of the newly endorsed [Gender Equality Acceleration Plan](#).

² The [Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network](#) (MOPAN) comprises 22 members who assess multilateral organizations, shape performance standards, and champion learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promote accountability.

AGD INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING



74 per cent of countries reported having collected official population statistics **disaggregated by age, sex and nationality**.



Of the 47 million forcibly displaced and stateless children in 2023, **7 million accessed protection services** from UNHCR and its partners (8.4 million in 2022).



72 per cent of operations incorporated disability inclusion into their programming (68 per cent in 2022).



63 per cent of operations reported having implemented activities **incorporating the needs of LGBTQ+ persons** (40 per cent in 2022).

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION



64 per cent (25 out of 39) of reporting operations indicated that they provided **extensive support for the participation of refugees and asylum-seekers** across various programme phases. **71 per cent** (10 out of 14) reported providing **extensive support for the participation of internally displaced persons** throughout various programme phases.



76 country operations reported having **conducted participatory assessments** with groups of diverse age, gender and characteristics to inform programming and interventions (72 country operations in 2022).

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY



136 active HELP websites in 32 languages **reached 13 million** people (104 HELP websites in 2022).

FEEDBACK AND RESPONSE



67 per cent of country operations reported to **have multichannel FRMs in place**, based on consultations with communities (in line with 2022).

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND ADAPTATION



UNHCR used **post-distribution monitoring** to assess the impact of Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs) on more than **31,000 interviewed households in 73 countries** (some 28,000 households in 2022).

WOMEN AND GIRLS' PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION



40 per cent of reporting country operations indicated that at least **50 per cent** of existing leadership and management positions were held by women.



21 per cent of UNHCR-funded partnerships identified themselves as women-led organizations.

INDIVIDUAL REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION



Women and girls represented **54 per cent** of the 2,570,000 new individuals registered in proGres and issued with individual documentation (58 per cent in 2022).

EQUAL ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER ASSISTANCE



54 per cent of the 7.3 million recipients of cash assistance were women (51 per cent in 2022).

EQUAL ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS, HEALTH AND EDUCATION



Of the more than 9.2 million health consultations conducted, **58 per cent** were with women and girls (57 per cent in 2022).



53 per cent of the participants in livelihood and economic interventions were women.



42 per cent of DAFI scholarship recipients were women (in line with 2022).

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE SERVICES



72 per cent of 122 UNHCR country operations had GBV services available for survivors and those at risk of experiencing GBV (in line with 2022).



Introduction

Lemnis Milagros Montanés, a Venezuelan community leader in Comuna 13, Medellín, has dedicated herself to training refugees, returnees, and host mothers, while also serving as a territorial promoter for Intégrate Medellín and running a family business.
© UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez

► Scope and structure of the report

The 2023 Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Accountability Report reviews the implementation of the [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#) (hereafter the “AGD policy”) at global, regional and country levels. This annual report examines the progress made by UNHCR against the AGD policy’s core actions within specific areas of engagement: AGD-inclusive programming, Accountability to Affected People (AAP) and gender equality.

This edition of the report also elaborates on UNHCR efforts to advance participatory methodologies by examining how it promoted participation at each phase of programming. Diverse practices in country operations showcase how inputs and feedback from forcibly displaced and stateless persons were used to inform, adjust and monitor programming. Innovative approaches supporting AGD across sectors, including through digitalization, are also highlighted.

The report includes Spotlights sections focusing on UNHCR work with diverse AGD groups, showing how AGD was integrated into protection and solutions activities. As in past years, another section of the report

highlights efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the UNHCR workforce and to fulfil our commitment to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). The report also revisits the final recommendations from the longitudinal evaluation of UNHCR implementation of the AGD policy, which was completed at the end of 2023. Like the previous 2022 edition, this report also reflects on the organization’s implementation of some key United Nations system-wide strategies and accountability frameworks, notably the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) and Youth2030. In 2023 UNHCR underwent its fourth Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment, covering the period from January 2018 to August 2023. This study assessed whether UNHCR was fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving global context;³ including in areas that are connected to UNHCR’s AGD policy commitments, such as the need for the organization to continue working on gender equality. The report concludes with a “Ways forward” section that proposes actions for the ongoing implementation of the AGD policy, also in line with the longitudinal evaluation’s recommendations.

³ See footnote 2.

► Methodology and limitations

This report largely builds on analysis of the 2023 annual results reporting submitted through COMPASS by country operations, regional bureaux and UNHCR Headquarters divisions and entities. It uses thematic reports and inputs from Headquarters divisions and entities to complement the analysis. The field practices that feature in this report were selected in coordination with regional bureaux and country offices worldwide. Quantitative data was gathered from several sources: the UNHCR planning, budgeting and monitoring system, COMPASS, including data on core indicators; the UNHCR Population Registration and Identity Management Ecosystem (PRIMES); data-collection exercises using Kobo tools and ActivityInfo; and UNHCR technical sectoral monitoring tools for livelihoods, health, education and cash assistance.

The breadth of UNHCR work, the recurring emergencies and the pressure on its staff often make it difficult for the organization to systematically gather detailed information and report adequately on its efforts to consider all AGD dimensions when protecting and assisting forcibly displaced and stateless persons. UNHCR needs to continue its efforts to access AGD-disaggregated data from governments and other partners. Additionally, to ensure comprehensive reporting on AGD progress and achievements, further organizational learning and adaptation is needed in relation to COMPASS and its new planning and reporting methods, such as multi-year strategies and annual results reporting.

To collect available evidence and quality information and to validate content, this report's authors have relied on the support of UNHCR staff at the country, regional and headquarters levels. These staff members have systematically contributed to the selection and presentation of all the examples in this report.



UNHCR Italy participates in the commemorations of the Day of Remembrance and Reception in Lampedusa. This anniversary was established under law 45/2016 to remember and commemorate all victims who have lost their lives at sea in a desperate attempt to reach Europe to find safety.

© UNHCR/Michele Cirillo

This map represents the selected examples that are used for the purpose of this year's AGD Accountability Report.

map

map



I. Progress in Implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

Sudan. Razan, a UNHCR volunteer in Wadi Halfa. UNHCR is conducting a market assessment with support of volunteers. © UNHCR

▶ I.i Age-, gender- and diversity-inclusive programming (Action 1)

The different capacities, needs and exposure to protection risks of the women, men, girls and boys with whom we work must be incorporated into assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Core
Action 1

“At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming.”

Overview

Data disaggregated by age, sex and nationality was collected and reported in [UNHCR official statistics in 74 per cent of 179 countries](#) to guide programming and prioritize interventions.⁴ The 2023 results indicate a 9 per cent increase in data disaggregated by age, sex and nationality compared to 2019. AGD-disaggregated data was available for all population groups in 31 per cent of countries, and for at least one population group in 43 per cent of countries. The availability of this data varied by population group, with disaggregation being highest for refugees and internally displaced persons (over 50 per cent) and lower for asylum-seekers (31 per cent), internally displaced returnees (16 per cent) and refugee returnees (14 per cent). Official statistics on forcibly displaced and stateless population groups are available to the public on [Refugee Data Finder](#). In its efforts to gather and present all available data in a visual form, UNHCR continued to expand its [Orion Analytics Centre](#), which is internally available to UNHCR staff for data analysis and planning. In 2023, a new function was added, allowing staff to view all available population data, disaggregated by age and sex, from UNHCR official population statistics and its [PRIMES](#) platform. This enables staff to compare population demographic cohorts within and between countries or regions, which is useful for programme design and targeting strategies. UNHCR staff can also analyse data using customized age groups for specific purposes. This function also shows the amount of data where AGD is unspecified, an indicator of AGD-reporting compliance.

In 2023, the UNHCR core registration, identity and case management system, [proGres](#), was used in 135 countries by UNHCR, partners and governments to register individuals and capture data on age, gender, disability and other specific needs. The Division of International Protection, the Global Data Service and regional bureaux cooperated to improve guidance and explore system adaptation to ensure that information on diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) can be collected in a safe and ethical way during registration and case processing, using [proGres](#).

UNHCR continued its efforts to disaggregate AGD data across sectors to improve the efficiency of responses, using internal sectoral information tools to capture data by age, sex and diverse characteristics. Two examples are the [Integrated Refugee Health Information System](#), used in 20 countries, and the [Livelihoods Information System](#), used in 34 countries, both of which disaggregate data by age, gender and nationality.

Additionally, the Education Information System – which tracks child school enrolment in country operations – and the Child Protection Dashboard – which covers case management, protection risks, interventions, staffing and indicators – disaggregate data by age, sex, nationality and disability.

AGD considerations were included in the analysis of needs, risks, priorities and capacities of displaced and stateless persons and informed country operation programming, with gender and disability incorporated into [COMPASS](#), the UNHCR results-based management approach. The disability marker was used in 70 country operations, while the gender marker was applied in 81 country operations.⁵

An internal analysis of 2023 annual country reports indicates that at least 72 per cent of operations incorporated disability inclusion into programming (against 68 per cent in 2022). Sixty-three per cent of operations reported having implemented activities addressing the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) persons (against 40 per cent in 2022); this reflects an increased understanding among UNHCR staff of inclusive programming and cooperation with LGBTIQ+ organizations.

Disaggregated data on activities for older persons was provided by 13 per cent of country operations. Around 15 per cent of the 47 million forcibly displaced and stateless children accessed protection services from UNHCR and its partners (compared to 40 per cent of 21.2 million in 2022). Although the number of forcibly displaced and stateless children doubled and UNHCR funding was reduced, the organization maintained child protection services at 2022 levels. A key action in the new UNHCR Policy on [child protection](#) is to strengthen inclusive systems and better integrate child protection into planning and programming. Thirty-one operations incorporated youth engagement into their programming and strategy for 2024.

Finally, in 2023, the new [UNHCR Programme Handbook for Partners](#) was issued, with recommendations for integrating an AGD approach in all phases of the programme cycle: Plan for, Get, and Show Results. A complementary internal guide was drafted and made available to UNHCR staff. It outlines specific actions as well as staff roles and responsibilities to implement these recommendations. These resources are expected to drive more AGD-inclusive programming in operations.

⁴ See footnote 1.

⁵ UNHCR organizational markers capture areas of importance for UNHCR in line with global policy commitments. Operations use markers in their results frameworks to capture how interventions and results are contributing to a cross-cutting issue.

Experiences from the field in age-, gender- and diversity-inclusive programming

To assess progress towards the implementation of the AGD policy, the bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region carried out a self-assessment exercise in eight of its country operations. It assessed how sectoral data was disaggregated by age, sex, nationality, disability, health status, ethnicity, skills and sexual orientation. The assessment analysed data on education, food distribution, health and nutrition, livelihoods, programme monitoring and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). The assessment revealed that 95 per cent of sectoral data was disaggregated by age and sex, and 66 per cent was disaggregated by age, sex, disability or nationality. Data was also disaggregated by AGD in the Asia and the Pacific region, for example in the analysis of Rohingya movements by land and sea in the region, as summarized in a report on [Rohingya refugees in search of protection](#). According to the report, forcibly displaced minors, Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), and people with medical conditions were among those detained in countries along the route. The report also highlights how displaced women and girls are particularly at risk of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), kidnapping and being sold into marriage, sexual exploitation or domestic servitude.

Analysis of data disaggregated by age, sex and diversity was used to guide the design of UNHCR responses and interventions in country operations. In [Somalia](#), UNHCR used a Kobo-enabled vulnerability assessment tool to support a granular level analysis of the risks experienced by displaced women, children,

older persons and other groups at heightened risk; the findings were used to scale up the drought response. In [Pakistan](#), UNHCR and its partners evaluated the accessibility of humanitarian services for persons with disabilities in Sindh and Balochistan. This was followed by capacity-building workshops for humanitarian and government staff on accessible reconstruction. Additionally, the [Equal Access](#) application – a comprehensive platform designed as a one-stop-shop for persons with disabilities, offering access to a wide range of information, services, laws, policies and resources on disability rights and accessibility – was upgraded in partnership with the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority and the [Special Talent Exchange Program](#), resulting in 45 awareness posts in the app. This work facilitated identification, assistance and referrals to service providers and ensured access to justice, shelter, health, psychological and social support for refugees with disabilities.

Inter-agency collaboration in the [north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic](#) supported the pilot of a data-collection tool developed by the United Nations Population Fund, which leverages Artificial Intelligence to gather information on persons with disabilities. UNHCR is using this tool in community centres to increase the collection of accurate data on persons with disabilities and evaluate the accessibility and inclusivity of its services.

In [Panama](#), UNHCR supported the [Ministry of Women](#) to update its case management and statistical platform DATA MUJER to include disaggregated data on refugee and asylum-seeker survivors of Gender-Based Violence accessing response services at the Ministry's 17 integral care facilities.



Colombia. First generation of DAFI Scholars in Medellín, Colombia, study at the library and share experiences with UNHCR staff.
© UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez



Spotlight: Participation and inclusion in the Global Refugee Forum

Overview

UNHCR renewed its efforts to ensure the meaningful participation of displaced and stateless persons with diverse profiles in its 2023 [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF).

Among the 4,200 registered participants, 328 (8 per cent) were persons with experience of forced displacement and statelessness. They included delegations from 50 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, refugee students, refugee journalism mentees, refugees with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons with refugee status and 70 experts on refugee issues. Twenty-three refugee representatives accompanied 14 official government delegations, and some had the opportunity to speak during the plenary and side events. Additionally, during the forum, three States committed to creating refugee advisory mechanisms at the national level.

In an effort to ensure inclusive participation in the GRF, the [UNHCR interdivisional Task Team](#) on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons worked with its [Advisory Board](#) of forcibly displaced and stateless organizations to prepare for the GRF 2023. The Advisory Board, consisting of 16 Refugee-Led Organizations, helped UNHCR to identify 70 refugee experts from 27 countries, comprising 35 men, 31 women and four non-binary or gender-non-conforming persons, ranging from academics to health workers in refugee camps. The refugee experts acted as thematic pledge advisers, reviewing key documents, participating in core group and other meetings, and co-designing and speaking at high-level events.

During the GRF opening plenary, moderated by a refugee student leader, a [Joint Refugee Statement](#)⁶ was presented by a member of the Advisory Board. The statement, [endorsed by 175 organizations](#) led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, called for an AGD approach.



Adhieu Achuli Dhieu, representative of the Refugee-led Organization MonyQadow and member of the Advisory Board. © UNHCR/Baz Ratner

To accomplish the GCR (Global Compact on Refugees) objectives, we must stop viewing forcibly displaced and stateless persons as a monolithic group. We implore you to see us first and foremost as human beings with unique identities, needs and diverse backgrounds, and then work together to develop a range of tailored approaches as opposed to a one-size-fits-all strategy.” (Excerpt from the Joint Refugee Statement.)

WOMEN: Over the course of 2023, UNHCR facilitated the participation of 31 women-led refugee and internally displaced person organizations in 10 high-level global events, including the GRF.

LGBTIQ+: At least 23 LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists participated in the GRF, with some directly invited by UNHCR and others coming as part of state, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), or other delegations.

DISABILITIES: Three refugee participants with disabilities were accompanied by support persons to ensure their meaningful and equal participation. Refugees with disabilities had the opportunity to share their experiences and network with other delegates representing the [International Disability Alliance](#).

CHILDREN: For the first time, refugee children and a host community child representative participated in the GRF. In the lead-up to the forum, 434 children from 11 countries participated in a series of consultations organized by the [Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts](#), of which UNHCR is a part. Children were invited to express their key messages for the GRF organizers, attending governments and other GRF participants in [Our Call for Answers: Children’s Manifesto to the Global Refugee Forum 2023](#).

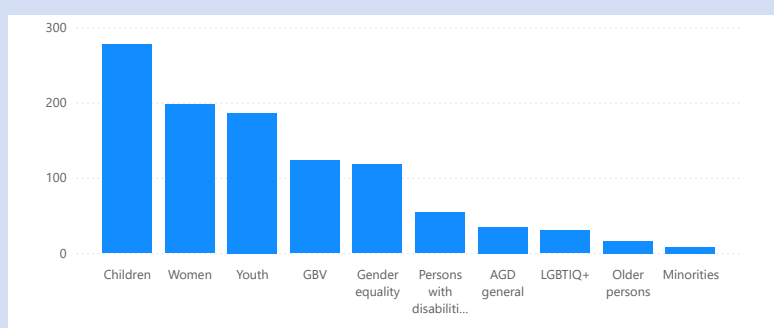
YOUTH: UNHCR ensured the participation of refugee youth in the GRF through various networks, including the UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council ([GYAC](#)), the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) Student Network, the [Tertiary Refugee Student Network](#), the [Young Champions for Refugees Network](#) and the Global Refugee Youth Network (GRYN). As part of the preparatory GRF webinar series for forcibly displaced and stateless participants, GRYN and UNHCR jointly delivered capacity sessions for the youth participants on youth and student-led global advocacy.

⁶ The full Joint Refugee Statement is available in [English](#), [Arabic](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

In preparation for the 2023 GRF, a UNHCR-supported [AGD Group of Friends](#) met regularly to update governmental humanitarian missions on pledging opportunities and improve intersectionality in pledge formulation and implementation. At the GRF, the progress made on impactful AGD joint pledges was presented in the main plenary session and parallel high-level events. An [AGD Tipsheet](#), which includes a checklist for good practice in the field, was promoted to guide AGD-inclusive considerations in pledges. The AGD Group of Friends also organized an online

event titled [Making Inclusion a Reality in GRF Pledges: A Dialogue on AGD](#), with 75 participants including States, Refugee-Led Organizations and other GRF stakeholders. A refugee expert working with LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons and a 16-year-old activist member of the Initiative for Child Rights were among the panellists. A preliminary review of the pledges submitted during the 2023 GRF showed that 570 out of 1,902 pledges (30 per cent) made at the GRF included AGD elements.

Figure 1. Pledges disaggregated by Age, Gender and Diversity elements



Of the pledges that included AGD elements, 48 per cent included elements related to women, gender equality and GBV. UNHCR supported refugee women's participation in national, regional and global forums and closely collaborated with several women-led organizations to rally support for the GRF [multi-stakeholder pledge](#) on gender equality and protection from GBV and the [Avec Elles](#) pledge. During the forum, 10 founders of refugee women-led organizations, including [women refugee experts](#), highlighted their work in gender-pledge related events to increase private sector interest and knowledge about the needs and capacities of their organizations. [MADE51](#) was highlighted as a flagship initiative promoting women's empowerment and self-reliance. Two refugee artisan women introduced the [MADE51 and Artisan's Network pledge](#). Other pledges included commitments to end gender discrimination in nationality laws, inclusion of refugees in national GBV programmes, inclusion of sexual reproductive services in public health services and support for women-led organizations. A number of GRF pledges, both by member States and civil society, included elements supporting protection of and solutions for displaced LGBTIQ+

persons, largely in the context of resettlement. As a result of UNHCR efforts at the forum, 277 pledges were child-focused and child-sensitive. Sixty-eight of them concerned child protection; these were primarily pledges by States to strengthen their national child protection systems. Nearly 186 GRF pledges supported youth, including the global pledge to [Support Work with, for and by Young People in Displacement](#). This global pledge encourages the channelling of funding and technical support to refugee youth-led organizations and networks; systematic outreach to and inclusion of marginalized young people in refugee responses; and the leveraging of young people's leadership skills, capacities and initiatives to advance community engagement. The pledge also calls for support for humanitarian actors, including youth groups and civil society, to implement the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises](#), through the creation of tools and training and the facilitation of knowledge-sharing and dialogue.

At least 5 per cent of the GRF pledges (54) included commitments on disability inclusion.



Armenia. Refugees arrive in Armenian border town. Arevig, UNHCR staff member, hands over a UNHCR leaflet with Hotline information and provides counseling to Anna, 34, who arrived in Armenia with her little son, Erik, 3 on 29 September.
© UNHCR/Karen Minasyan

▶ I.ii Accountability to Affected People (Actions 2-5)

Women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully in operations' work and are consulted on protection, assistance and solutions.

Core
Action 2

“At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes.”

Overview

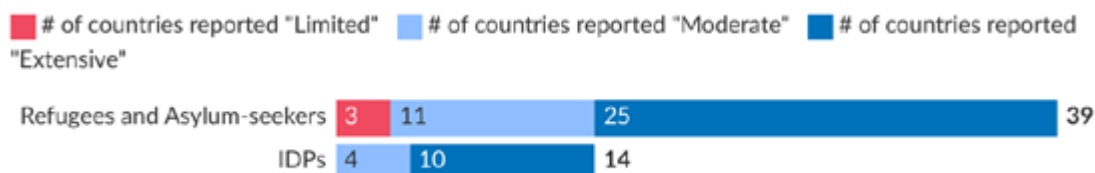
This section reviews UNHCR efforts to support the participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons across the programme phases: [Plan for, Get, and Show Results](#). Examples from country operations highlight the engagement of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in all phases of programming. Participation remains stronger in the assessment, planning and implementation phases of UNHCR and its partners' programmes, and requires improvement in monitoring and evaluation. The practice of reporting back to communities on assessment, monitoring and evaluation findings, and systematic investments to close the feedback loop, is yet to become a systematic part of UNHCR organizational culture.

In 2023, UNHCR reformulated its COMPASS Core Indicators, a set of standard indicators that support the global monitoring of results. As part of this process, a revised indicator was included to better measure UNHCR efforts to support the participation of displaced and stateless persons across all programming phases. The indicator, “[Extent participation of displaced and stateless persons across programme phases is supported](#)” (UNHCR intranet page), uses a self-assessment questionnaire that can be compiled specifically for each population type relevant to the operation. The questions refer to the participatory methods used by the operations, the population groups consulted, the types of community structures the operations engage with in different programming phases, and the support provided to Community-Based Organizations. **Thirty-nine UNHCR country operations reported on this indicator for refugees and asylum-seekers.** Of those, 25 operations (64 per cent) reported that support for

participation was “extensive” and 11 operations (28 per cent) reported that it was “moderate”. Additionally, **14 UNHCR operations** reported on this core indicator for **internally displaced persons** as a population group,

with “extensive” support reported by 10 countries (71 per cent) and “moderate” support reported by the remaining four.

Extent participation of forcibly displaced people across programme phases is supported



Source: [Community engagement and women’s empowerment | Global Focus \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/global-focus/2023/11/community-engagement-and-women-s-empowerment)

UNHCR also considered methods for better assessing the level of participation and inclusion when formulating the COMPASS core output indicators. These were finalized in 2023 and will be included in the planning and reporting cycle starting in 2024. For instance, a dedicated core output indicator was created to assess and report on the number of individuals consulted through participatory assessments.

Seventy-six country operations reported having conducted participatory assessments, engaging with at least 48,000 forcibly displaced and stateless persons of diverse age, gender and other characteristics, and subsequently considering their needs, priorities, capacities and proposals in the planning and prioritization of UNHCR activities.

UNHCR continued to invest in the use of digital tools at global and regional levels, including exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), to support and accelerate the analysis of findings from participatory assessments and other forms of consultations with communities and facilitate their inclusion into UNHCR programming. At the global level, a revised **Participatory Assessment Toolkit** was tested in several operations, in cooperation with the Asia and the Pacific Bureau. The Toolkit includes a practical guide on how to conduct participatory assessments replacing previous guidance and a series of dedicated digital tools to systemize findings more swiftly, harmonize data analysis, and store and visualize the results of participatory interventions. This initiative built on similar pilot initiatives designed by the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Bureau and rolled out in **Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic**, where it facilitated the analysis of structured dialogues with 29,000 community members, including 12,350 women and girls, 1,700 persons with disabilities, and 1,750 people with diverse SOGIESC.

UNHCR revised its assessment tools to promote participation and inclusion principles. The updated UNHCR Needs Assessment for Refugee Emergencies ([NARE analytical framework](#)) was released in 2023. It includes a series of updated [checklists](#) that provide sector-specific guidance on analysing and gathering information before and during emergencies, including on community structures and dynamics, power relations, and access to information and feedback mechanisms that could enable or hinder the participation of forcibly displaced persons in emergencies. UNHCR also advocated for the inclusion of AGD considerations and meaningful participation at inter-agency level, notably in the UNHCR-World Food Programme [Joint Analytical Framework](#). This Framework was developed to guide analysis of the capacity of displaced and stateless persons to meet their basic needs, and to inform food assistance, cash and livelihood programmes. UNHCR also included questions on information needs and preferred communication channels in the NARE analytical framework, the Joint Analytical Framework and the Cash-Based Intervention (CBI) post-distribution monitoring tool.

UNHCR **situation analysis and strategic planning** exercises are a key step in the programming cycle. They encourage the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons and their organizations as equal participants alongside partners and authorities. Through outreach efforts to identify organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons across all operations, UNHCR launched a global mapping tool and mapped 562 such organizations, including some previously unknown to it. This mapping enabled these organizations to engage in UNHCR planning exercises and, in some cases, participate in capacity-building activities and grant opportunities at the 2023 GRF.⁷

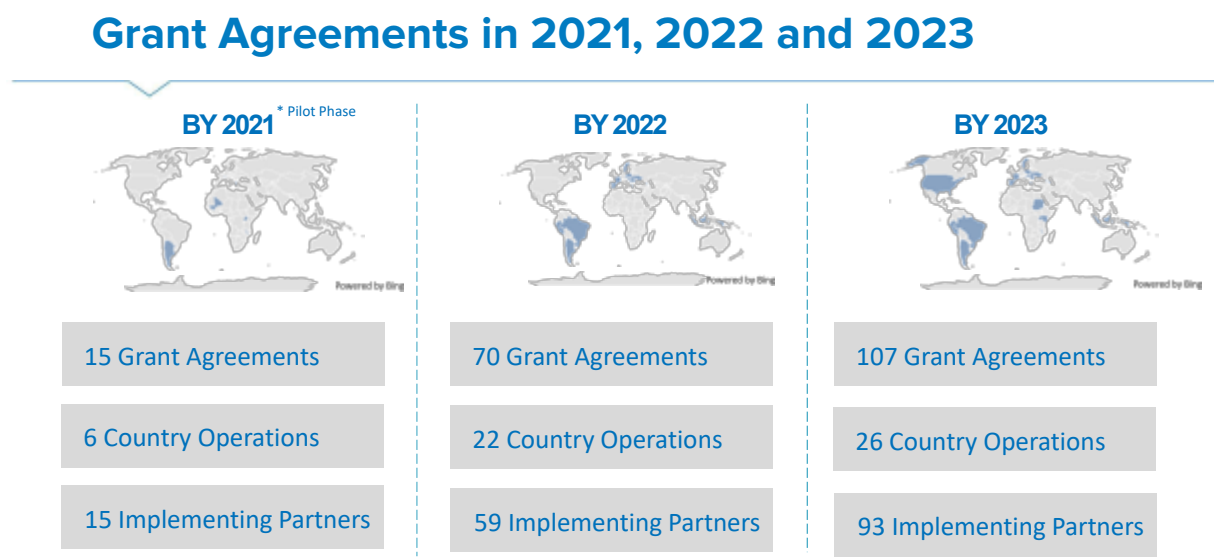
⁷ Less than 5 per cent of the mapped organizations are led by persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, girls or stateless persons.

Twenty-eight UNHCR country operations reported having engaged with forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the planning process. This included integrating recommendations from forcibly displaced and stateless persons, groups and organizations⁸ in country operation strategies, refugee response plans, and internal displacement laws and policies.

As part of its systematic localization agenda, UNHCR increased the involvement of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in implementing programmes and activities. During 2023, UNHCR formed **107 new partnerships with grassroots organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in 26 countries.**

The implementation of community-based projects through direct cooperation with forcibly displaced and stateless persons increased by 35 per cent compared to 2022. The [UNHCR Grant Agreements with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons](#) was used to support diverse groups of grass-roots organizations led by women, persons with disabilities, youth, LGBTIQ+ persons, and minorities in Sudan, Malawi, Poland, Peru, Indonesia, and other countries. Since its 2021 pilot in six countries, the number of countries in which it is implemented has increased more than fourfold. Projects under the grant support participation in refugee and youth parliaments, language courses, women’s empowerment, psychosocial support for older persons, social cohesion, livelihoods, awareness on sexual reproductive health, communication and outreach to refugee communities, summer camps and more.

Figure 2. Grants for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons



As in previous years, in 2023 under the dedicated [Refugee-Led Innovation Fund \(RLIF\)](#), UNHCR awarded **17 grants of up to \$45,000** to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, selected from over 3,300 applications. The grants supported sustainable agriculture, digital literacy for women, awareness on statelessness, health infrastructure, social integration of LGBTIQ+ refugees, and livelihoods. UNHCR also supported the organizations, which came from over 20 countries, with capacity-building for their members, including digital literacy and skills enhancement for project reporting, project monitoring, and administrative tasks associated with project management.

In addition to the grant agreements, UNHCR ran other initiatives to engage community volunteers, supported sectoral committees and created community-led projects and spaces. At least **25 UNHCR operations reported engaging with community volunteers** across the WASH, shelter, health, education, and protection sectors. Volunteers provided information and raised awareness about services, identified and referred individuals in vulnerable situations for assistance and access to services, participated in site maintenance initiatives, organized non-formal education sessions, and engaged in protection monitoring and peace promotion.

⁸ UNHCR defines a forcibly displaced and stateless organization as an organization in which persons with direct lived experience of forced displacement play a primary leadership role and whose stated objectives and activities focus on responding to the needs of refugees and related communities.

UNHCR field practices for participation and inclusion

Diverse participatory and inclusive methodologies ensured that the design and delivery of assessments was culturally appropriate. UNHCR **El Salvador** and its partners conducted over 100 consultations with 1,564 forcibly displaced persons (61 per cent of whom were women), including specific discussions on GBV in five locations. Communities took a leading role in facilitating the discussions. Within the consulted population, 59 per cent represented groups at risk of marginalization, including LGBTIQ+ persons, older persons and youth. Over 100 female leaders shared their concerns about their mental health, reporting strain due to their burden of care work, economic burden and the security situation.

UNHCR **Tajikistan** also used AI, specifically the Kobo Toolbox and Quid analysis (an AI-powered analytics tool), to support five town hall meetings, a participatory assessment and ad-hoc meetings in all the locations where forcibly displaced persons were living.

More work is needed to ensure that UNHCR shares feedback with forcibly displaced and stateless persons on the actions taken in response to their recommendations and inputs during consultations and assessments. One operation that attempted this was UNHCR **Angola**, which fed back to forcibly displaced persons on the strategic priorities and the results of the participatory assessment, which had consulted 274 refugees, asylum-seekers and community members, during community meetings.

In some operations, forcibly displaced persons were actively engaged in designing projects, country strategies and refugee response plans. In **Honduras**, UNHCR engaged with 457 forcibly displaced persons and refugees (69 per cent were women and girls; 31 per cent were men and boys; and 13 per cent were children) to develop community protection plans, which informed UNHCR strategy. Additionally, these consultations contributed to the design of the Protection Law regulations for internally displaced persons. The process also involved consultations with 14 civil society and Community-Based Organizations of urban and rural areas of five regions of the country that are either led by or working with displaced women, children, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+, Indigenous and Afro-Honduran persons, schoolteachers, human rights defenders and other groups according to their risk profile. In **Nepal**, three refugee Community-Based Organizations participated for the first time in the UNHCR country-level operational strategic planning meeting; half of the refugee participants were women. In the **Republic of Moldova**, UNHCR worked with other stakeholders to include forcibly displaced and

stateless persons in humanitarian programming. Local consultations were held in nine locations during work to develop the 2024 Refugee Response Plan, with over 160 participants from the government, civil society organizations, international NGOs, and the refugee and host community, who voiced their concerns and suggested solutions. In **Italy**, refugee community outreach volunteers were involved in three focus groups conducted by the Municipality of Rome to shape the 2024–2026 Social Plan of the city. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, a [Participatory Assessment Report](#) conducted between October and November 2023 was used to tailor programming for 2024, including interventions to mitigate protection risks across different demographic groups. Thanks to such assessments, the 2023 humanitarian response included adapted interventions to provide food, Non-Food Items (NFIs) and shelter, as well as quick impact projects including water boreholes in villages, energy-saving stoves, and other interventions supporting livelihoods.

In several regions, UNHCR continued to use **community volunteer programmes** to increase engagement. In **Bangladesh**, the country operation and its partners worked with the [Environment and Climate Action Innovation Fund](#) to train 20 incentivized refugee volunteers (six of them women) to run a Green Innovation Hub on electronic waste (e-waste) management. This Hub engaged with 4,253 households, raising community awareness of this toxic waste and leading to 9.4 tons of it being collected and ethically recycled.

UNHCR **supported community-led initiatives** to design interventions based on their needs, capacities and proposals. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the organization supported 775 community groups, led by 6,856 community members, including community and youth-led initiatives, with technical and material assistance. These initiatives reached over 1,321,000 women and girls out of 2,390,000 people, and 18,511 persons with disabilities (51 per cent of whom were women). One of the projects, led by persons with disabilities, is a training centre. In 2023, 100 persons with disabilities (63 per cent of them women) attended sessions there. Another project targeted women with hearing and speaking difficulties and supported them to run their own cosmetics business.

In multiple operations, UNHCR supported **community spaces and community centres** at the request of communities, to serve as safe meeting spaces, to provide places for information-sharing, recreation and protection counselling, and to support small livelihood initiatives. In **Iraq**, UNHCR worked together with communities and local authorities to manage 45 physical community spaces, to facilitate safe access to information, services, Feedback and Response

Mechanisms (FRMs) and community support networks, among other programmes. In **Sudan**, to respond to the unfolding emergency, and working with partners and communities, the organization established multipurpose community centres in locations that received newly displaced populations, such as White Nile and Blue Nile States. The centres provided crucial support to humanitarian efforts and community activities, serving as safe spaces and hubs for community gatherings and consultations, assistance delivery and comprehensive protection services, including referrals to specialized services.

Community representation structures and sectoral committees have worked with UNHCR as partners for many years. They support protection initiatives by and for the community, improve outreach and identify individuals at heightened protection risk so they can be prioritized for assistance and referred to specialized services. In **Tunisia**, two refugee committees were established, one in Tunis and the other in the south of the country, to respond to the increased information needs of Sudanese nationals and other communities. Comprised mainly of Sudanese and South Sudanese members, these committees facilitated communication with UNHCR, identified at-risk individuals and coordinated support efforts, including legal assistance, medical aid and NGO partnerships. They referred at least 300 individuals for medical help and 50 at-risk asylum-seekers for shelter support.

In the States of Sucre and Bolivar in the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** and in Lima, **Peru**, UNHCR promoted community empowerment and self-reliance through “multi-service days”. UNHCR partners and Community-Based Organizations formed multi-service mobile teams that reached 1,314 displaced persons in the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** and 1,511 asylum-seekers and refugees in **Peru**, including women, children, LGBTIQ+ persons and persons with disabilities. They provided communities with a response covering various areas of need, such as health, counselling and legal assistance.

UNHCR promoted field practices for monitoring its activities through the active engagement of communities. Various operations set up community WASH committees that, having received training from UNHCR, actively monitored water pumps and made repairs. For example, refugee camps in **Malawi** and **Zimbabwe** had up to three refugee water maintenance technicians each, some of them women, and 10 WASH promoters (seven women and three men), who maintained WASH infrastructure, shared information on hygiene and identified problems.

Protection monitoring by community members is a practice in volatile and access-constrained areas of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. Community monitors alert UNHCR and its partners on human rights violations such as attacks by armed groups and forced recruitment of children.⁹ UNHCR partners trained community monitors to identify, analyse and report such violations via a countrywide protection alert and response system.

Country operations involved forcibly displaced and stateless persons in evaluations. In **Mauritania**, community members in the Mbera camp actively participated in needs assessments, protection monitoring and evaluations. This included taking a leading role in developing recommendations for multiple initiatives, including the [Country Strategy Evaluation for UNHCR Mauritania](#), partly documented in this [video](#). An evaluation based on case studies in **Jordan**, **Kenya** and **Mauritania**, titled [UNHCR's Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation Post-2021: How to Stay the Course](#) highlighted gender disparity in the poverty and income outcomes for female-headed households.



Sabina works as a Community Health Volunteer in Kalobeyei settlement where she attends to members from both the refugee and host communities on various healthcare needs. © UNHCR/Charity Nzomo.

⁹ For example, [Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection Nord Kivu \(INTERSOS and UNHCR\)](#)

Age, gender and Diversity approaches in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

UNHCR provided [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support](#) (MHPSS) services to 1.3 million people, up from 1.1 million in 2022.¹⁰ While displaced populations face elevated levels of mental health conditions, access to mental health services in settings of displacement is extremely limited, due to low resources and high needs. Persons with disabilities, older persons and others may face additional barriers to access MHPSS services, such as discrimination, stigma and accessibility.

UNHCR integrated AGD elements into the [IASC Minimum Service Package for MHPSS](#) which guides the coordination, planning and implementation of MHPSS activities. Research on [Designing Safe Digital MHPSS for Displaced and Stateless Adolescents](#) explored the potential and risks of using digital tools. This research emphasized the need to co-design interventions with displaced youth and recommended how to address existing barriers and challenges.

Field practices

In **Bangladesh** UNHCR consulted Rohingya refugees living in camps on the use of MHPSS information, education and communication materials, holding a series of meetings with groups of adolescent males and females, older persons, female religious leaders and imams. The UNHCR MHPSS team learned that the Rohingya refugees did not perceive the materials to be relevant or understandable. It therefore set out to revise the materials: community members were

invited to sketch and write what they deemed relevant and easily understandable to their community; then, psychologists, protection colleagues and volunteers from different sectors were consulted; finally, a Rohingya volunteer with artistic skills reworked all the drawings to be culturally relevant.



Bangladesh. Umme Salama, 20, conducts an individualised counselling session for Rohingya refugee at a primary healthcare centre in Cox's Bazar, part of UNHCR's mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programme © UNHCR/ Fahima Tajrin

¹⁰ [Annual Report 2023: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(UNHCR\)](#)

Figure 3. Guidance note on self-care, Bangladesh



In **Lebanon**, 62 trained outreach volunteers reached 5,712 persons (65 per cent of them women) through group [Problem Management Plus](#) sessions, peer support sessions and psychological first aid. Among the PM+ participants, 77 per cent reported improved functioning and reduced distress three weeks after the sessions. The outreach volunteers gained skills and knowledge from the training, noted positive changes in their own personalities and reported feeling satisfaction seeing the sessions' positive impact on participants.

In **Ukraine**, UNHCR provided psychosocial support to 54,687 children through community-based activities led by specialists and trained non-specialists. Children were able to play, socialize, learn new skills and express themselves through sports, religious activities, life skills classes, and art and culture group activities. Children and caregivers received child-sensitive information on child rights, protection issues, and available state and humanitarian services.

In **Costa Rica**, women's groups highlighted the need to promote MHPSS actions. In response, UNHCR set up mental health sessions for women that took a self-care and empowerment approach and created a [toolkit](#) to support women to find ways to take care of their mental health.

In **Greece**, UNHCR partnered with the Association for Regional Development and Mental Health to support the Community Psychosocial Workforce, comprised of displaced persons of diverse nationalities and profiles.

These displaced persons completed rigorous PM+ and psychological first aid training, which enabled them to then provide psychosocial support to others and make referrals to services and social networks in urban Athens through a psychosocial support helpline and office-based consultations. Home visits were arranged for older persons and people living with disabilities. The Community Psychosocial Workforce supported asylum-seekers and refugees in their native languages including Farsi, Arabic, Urdu, Lingala, French, Ukrainian and Russian. The [Planning for Prevention and Risk Mitigation of Suicide in Refugee Settings](#) toolkit issued in 2023 was used to train the team and urgent cases were referred to the mental health professionals supervising the team.

In **Peru**, UNHCR provided counselling, therapy groups, psychotherapy, self-care sessions and crisis care to 1,140 people, of whom 72 per cent were women, 24 per cent were men and 4 per cent were LGBTIQ+ persons.

In **South Sudan**, youth peacebuilders benefited from both individual and group therapy sessions, which contributed to their mental health well-being. An AGD approach to mental health and psychosocial well-being informed the 2023 publication on [Culture, Context and Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons from South Sudan](#).

▶ Communication and transparency (Action 3)

Women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds in all operations have access to timely, accurate and relevant information on (i) their rights and entitlements, (ii) UNHCR and its partners' programmes.

Core
Action 3

“At a minimum, all country-level protection and solutions strategies will detail the operation’s approach to communicating with women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds, through means that are appropriate and accessible to all groups in a community.”

Overview

UNHCR has worked to adapt its communication channels to the preferences of forcibly displaced and stateless persons to provide timely, relevant and reliable information on their rights, entitlements and obligations, available assistance and opportunities, and how to contact UNHCR and its partners.

In line with a five-year AAP plan developed in 2022, UNHCR expanded its use of digital channels to communicate and share information with forcibly displaced and stateless persons. This shift was prompted by the results of assessments carried out in displacement contexts to identify communities' information and communication needs. These assessments indicated communities' strong preference to receive information through face-to-face as well as online channels, including social media platforms. The preference for online channels varied by country and age, being stronger among persons on the move, youth and populations with Internet connectivity and digital literacy.¹¹

UNHCR Help websites remained a critical source of information for displaced and stateless persons. In 2023, 31 new Help websites were launched, including one in [Sudan](#) during the first months of the crisis. As of end-2023, **Help websites were active and updated in 136 countries, in 32 languages.** The [Help websites](#) reached over 13 million people, with over 28 million page views worldwide. The most page views to UNHCR Help sites were made in Türkiye (1.9 million), the Islamic

Republic of Iran (1.8 million) and Ukraine (1.3 million). To ensure that information is accessible to diverse displaced and stateless persons, many Help websites were available in different languages spoken by refugees and asylum-seekers. For instance, the [Brazil](#), [Greece](#) and [Poland](#) Help websites have each translated their content into up to 10 languages.

UNHCR operations used **multiple and differentiated channels** to ensure that information was accessible to persons with a range of AGD profiles. Non-digital communication tools were maintained in line with the preferences of diverse groups of forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and included visuals (posters, notice boards), oral and face-to-face channels such as community radio, mobile information caravans, protection help desks, virtual and in-person meetings, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), community meetings and individual counselling. Information was also shared in written and visual formats through virtual newsletters, SMS text messages, WhatsApp messages and other social media channels. For instance, 16 WhatsApp Turn.io chatbots were operational in 15 country operations across several regions: MENA; East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes; the Americas; Europe; and Asia and the Pacific, providing information to some 75,000 users.

The increased use of digital tools prompted UNHCR to consider how to promote safeguards, ethical behaviours and data protection considerations. For instance, UNHCR conducted a data protection impact assessment of the [Twilio Flex solution](#). The impact

¹¹ [Assessment of Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability in Sudan \(Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network\)](#); [Communication for Refugee Integration \(The Government & Public Sector Practice\)](#); [Barriers & Bridges: Communication and Information Exchange with Ukrainian Refugees in Romania \(Internews\)](#); [Digital Access, Communication Needs and Community Practices \(UNHCR\)](#)

assessment sought to identify data protection risks and mitigation measures to ensure that data subject rights are upheld.

To engage with communities in a safe and responsible way through social media, UNHCR continued to follow the guidance on [Using Social Media in Community-Based Protection \(CBP\)](#) which is complemented by an online course developed in 2023 on [Social Media for CBP](#).

UNHCR field practices for communication and transparency

In the MENA region, the [MENA AAP Toolkit](#) was created, with a dedicated chapter on feedback and response tools, including a standard list of feedback and complaint categories provided by the [Refugee Assistance Information System \(RAIS\)](#). **Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Libya** are currently using this system, while **Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia** and the **north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic** have taken the first steps towards implementing it. The MENA AAP Toolkit also includes a [MENA Feedback and Response Standard Operating Procedures model](#) and a [Digital Feedback, Complaint, and Response Mechanism Map](#).

UNHCR and its partners conducted direct outreach interventions to provide information to communities about their rights and available services. In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, more than 59,000 displaced persons were informed about available services through in-person Friday information campaigns, resulting in increased awareness on services for refugees. In **Libya**, UNHCR reached over 2,300 refugees and asylum-seekers through 123 field visits. To tackle a lack of awareness among refugees and asylum-seekers of public health centre locations, UNHCR intensified dissemination of information on primary health-care facilities and access to medical assistance through face-to-face interactions. This resulted in improved community access to health care in urban areas. In **Egypt**, UNHCR and its partners facilitated 83 community meetings and 2,738 information sessions, which were supported by refugee outreach workers. These sessions reached almost 49,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly new arrivals from Sudan, including persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ persons. In **Serbia**, UNHCR and its partners produced leaflets on asylum that were tailored to children aged 13–18. These were translated into several languages and distributed to all locations where displaced children were accommodated.

In **Kenya**, UNHCR reached more than 130,500 refugees and asylum-seekers with critical and life-saving information using mobile information caravan services, bulk SMS, film screenings, youth-leader meetings

and radio talk shows. In **Mali**, UNHCR launched the “One Household, One Phone” project providing 154 households with a smartphone and a SIM card to facilitate better access to information, as well as a radio, solar panel and three solar lamps to enable children to study after dark, and technical training to use these tools. As part of the project, UNHCR successfully lobbied the Malian government to accept refugee identity cards and asylum-seeker certificates as valid documents to acquire SIM cards.

The UNHCR [Lebanon Help website](#) launched in May 2023 as a “first-stop-shop” for refugees to access trusted information on services and assistance. From June to December 2023, the website received some 1.2 million views. UNHCR also sent 2,726 bulk WhatsApp messages and SMS on various topics including cash assistance, registration, education, health and counter-fraud/integrity, and messages to promote the Help website. In **Brazil**, the [Help website](#) reached over 380,000 individuals with information available in nine languages, covering all the main languages of the refugees present in the country, including Indigenous groups at risk. In **Ecuador**, the number of visits to the [Help website](#) increased by 167 per cent compared to 2022, registering more than 784,000 visits. In **Mexico**, around 250,000 users interacted with the content published through the [Confía en el Jaguar \(Trust the Jaguar\)](#) while the [UNHCR Mexico Help website](#) received over 412,000 unique page views.

Social media is one of the most-used channels to access information by forcibly displaced persons, especially by younger persons. UNHCR therefore increased its use of social media to reach forcibly displaced and stateless persons with vital information. Different nationalities had their own preferred social media communication channels, prompting UNHCR to adapt its communication tools to effectively reach various groups. In **El Salvador**, the communication campaign [A tu lado](#), launched in early 2023, used social media and offline communication channels such as face-to-face meetings to reach a massive audience of some **four million** people in two months to communicate on available services in support spaces. In **Thailand**, where [UNHCR social media](#) has close to 5,000 subscribers, the organization used a messaging application to inform refugees and asylum-seekers about changes in asylum procedures, such as UNHCR card renewal, and to announce new partners’ services. In **Spain**, UNHCR launched a virtual [newsletter](#) for refugees and stateless persons, facilitating the dissemination of information to those in areas where UNHCR had no permanent presence. In **Hungary**, the operation launched [Safe Online](#) – a guide to improve awareness of the need to protect oneself from the risks of online communication and of specific safeguards to improve safety.



Spotlight: Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Overview

UNHCR operations report that forcibly displaced persons belonging to [minority ethnic, linguistic, religious or Indigenous groups](#) often face risks of discrimination and marginalization, and are severely affected by the negative consequences of climate change. Forcibly displaced Indigenous Peoples may be at heightened risk of being trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation. These risks are particularly acute for minority and Indigenous children and women. Individuals speaking minority languages may not be able to access official channels to increase their awareness or to report the violence they may experience, or may be unable to access protection services due to a lack of documentation. UNHCR engages with minority communities by informing them of their rights in their native languages, facilitating access to services and documentation, thus helping preserve traditional customs and languages.

Field practices

UNHCR supported Indigenous community-led organizations through grant agreements. For example, in [Brazil](#), it funded and promoted a self-reliance project for Indigenous communities, while in [Poland](#) it facilitated exchanges between Roma refugees and the authorities to support access to housing, health care, education and employment.

Members of minority groups may lack legal documentation and tend to live on the margins of mainstream society, resulting in a lack of **access to national health and education services**. In [Guyana](#), UNHCR assisted 15 remote riverine communities with transportation to reach essential health and education services. It provided farming and carpentry tools to support agriculture, improve shelters and construct rainwater collection systems to help the communities access water during the dry season. In [Guatemala](#), to enable Indigenous children to access formal and non-formal education, UNHCR expanded its support to the Indigenous [association Ak'Tenamit](#) in the municipality of Livingston. This partnership helped to address protection risks, including GBV, and promote the employability and entrepreneurship of the centre's young graduates.

In the [Republic of Moldova](#), UNHCR partner [Tarna Rom](#) organized literacy classes for Roma children living in collective accommodation centres. Awareness-raising on a range of protection issues was also carried out in the community, with the help of Roma community mediators.

Several UNHCR operations **advocated for minority needs through national forums**. UNHCR in [Trinidad and Tobago](#) hosted a two-day Indigenous People's Forum with over 50



Guatemala. Hilda Rosalia Mas Macz, 33, is an indigenous Mayan Q'eqchi' woman from the area and has been working at the „Ak Tenamit” Educational Centre for 8 years, after graduating from the same educational centre. © UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

Indigenous participants to explore how Indigenous communities can work together. UNHCR **Costa Rica** promoted the participation of forcibly displaced Indigenous leaders in consultative processes conducted by the Ombudsperson's Office. In **Brazil**, Indigenous community leaders participated in key forums such as the [Amazon Summit for COP 2030](#) and Brazil's [Acampamento Terra Livre](#) event, where they presented their demands to federal authorities. With support from UNHCR, government authorities recognized Indigenous refugees and agreed to develop culturally appropriate responses. The Ministry of Indigenous People established a multisectoral group for Indigenous refugee policies, with contributions from UNHCR. In **Colombia**, UNHCR supported the political and organizational strengthening of cross-border Indigenous groups through technical support for the community planning tool "[Planes de Vida](#)". This was used by the E'ñepa, Yukpa, Kichwa and Inga peoples to strengthen self-government. UNHCR Colombia also supported the strengthening of the National Organization of the Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero People, by coordinating organizations in different departments and regions of Colombia and supporting the [Third National Summit of the Black, Raizal and Palenquero People](#).

In **Brazil**, displaced Indigenous Warao communities from the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** face challenges in proving their nationality and accessing rights and services due to a lack of documentation,

limited birth registration access, low literacy rates and language barriers that hinder communication with authorities. To promote culturally sensitive access to health, UNHCR **Brazil** partnered with the Bahserikowi Indigenous Traditional Health Centre and with two refugee-led Indigenous organizations: the Organization of Venezuelan Indigenous in Amazonas and the Warao Yorikuaré Taeraja Ja Council. It also carried out training with 15 Warao and E'ñepa Indigenous community leaders (60 per cent of them female) to familiarize them with the Sistema Único de Saúde, Brazil's health-care system. This training provided Indigenous leaders with resources to refer community members to health facilities, while also promoting the revitalization of and respect for Indigenous medicine and methods. As a result, trained individuals created an Indigenous Health Committee, active in six neighbourhoods of Manaus.

Several UNHCR operations adjusted **their communication channels to reach and support minorities**. In the **United States of America**, a UNHCR project supported the Government of the United States of America's reunification of separated families (most of them from Guatemalan Indigenous groups) by hiring Indigenous language speakers and developing print and audiovisual materials in the most common Indigenous languages.



Alejandrina González (left) and Argenia del Valle (right), two Warao refugees from Venezuela, are participating in a digital livelihoods programme in Boa Vista to expand their handicraft business. © UNHCR/Erika Perez Iglesias

▶ Feedback and response (Action 4)

Formal and informal feedback from persons of concern to UNHCR is systematically received and responded to, with corrective action taken as appropriate.

Core
Action 4

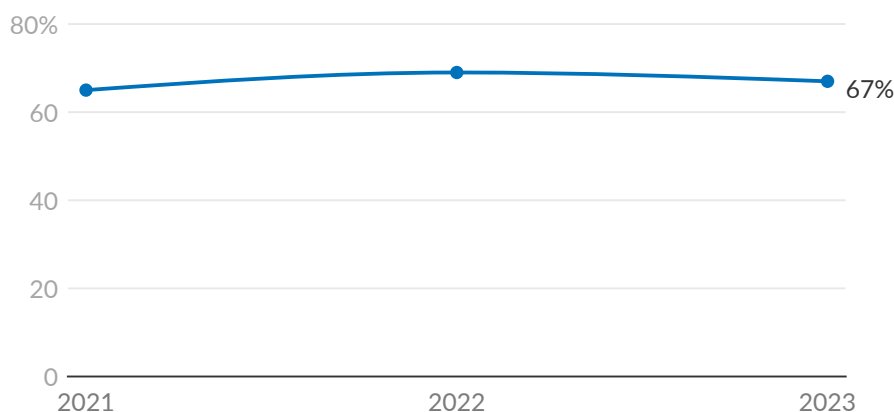
“At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.”

Overview

UNHCR is committed to ensuring that forcibly displaced and stateless persons have access to safe channels to raise concerns and provide feedback and suggestions on the programmes and activities of UNHCR and its partners. **Out of 132 UNHCR operations, 67 per cent reported having multichannel feedback and response systems that were designed based on consultations with forcibly displaced and stateless persons.** In 2023, as part of the process to reformulate COMPASS Core

Indicators, UNHCR revised the methodology for the indicator “proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms”, moving from a self-assessment to a survey-based methodology. It also introduced a new core output indicator to determine the number of people using UNHCR-supported FRMs, which will be applied from 2024.

Percentage of countries with a multichannel feedback and response system designed based on consultations with displaced and stateless persons



Source: [Community engagement and women’s empowerment | Global Focus \(unhcr.org\)](#)

Country operations used a variety of digital and non-digital tools to collect and respond to individual feedback from forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Feedback channels included chatbots, WhatsApp, emails, letters, UNHCR Help websites, contact centres, online and in-person community meetings, protection help desks, group counselling sessions, community volunteers/monitors and other community-based feedback mechanisms. Feedback was also gathered and responded to during FGDs, outreach sessions, key

informant interviews and results monitoring surveys. Online options to **share feedback directly with UNHCR were available on [UNHCR Help sites](#) in 27 countries.** Since September 2022, over 100 operations have reported supporting the work of contact centres that continued to function in 2023, with some centres being UNHCR-led, some partner-led and others inter-agency. A regional contact centre was set up in Panama to support the [Safe Mobility Offices](#), covering Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Guatemala.

UNHCR field practices for feedback and response

To strengthen FRMs, regional assessments on the coverage and effectiveness of these mechanisms were conducted. In Asia and the Pacific, a comprehensive mapping survey across 20 countries assessed existing FRMs, focusing on feedback data analysis and management. To address identified challenges of data management at the regional level, UNHCR established a harmonized feedback and response system in Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Bangladesh. A regional analysis of FRMs was also conducted across nine country operations in Southern Africa and eight operations in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.

In 2023, [UNHCR contact centres in the MENA region](#) in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Libya responded to more than 1.1 million queries from forcibly displaced and stateless persons regarding cash assistance, registration, resettlement and other durable solutions, health care and legal protection. Women accounted for 37 per cent of those seeking information through phone calls.

The transition to new interactive digital tools for FRM increased the capacity of operations to respond to the feedback and complaints received. In [Iraq](#), the digitalization of feedback, complaints and response mechanisms improved responsiveness, with all field offices achieving 100 per cent success in closing the feedback and referral loops. This was facilitated by the [Refugee Assistance and Information System](#), which recorded UNHCR responses to enquires from 12,867 refugees and 2,913 internally displaced persons. In [Ethiopia](#), UNHCR and its partners utilized digital tools through a Protection Monitoring Desk, which uses Kobo to record, refer and track feedback from face-to-face engagements. A Digital Request and Complaints System has expanded the geographic and sectoral capacity to collect and respond to feedback, including at food distribution points and protection desks, as well as through post-distribution monitoring of NFIs.

Operations took **measures to improve the awareness and use of FRMs** following recommendations from communities. In [Bangladesh](#), FRMs were reinforced following the results of a joint multi-sector needs assessment. The assessment found that only 52 per cent of the 3,400 households interviewed were aware of feedback mechanisms. To enhance awareness of FRMs, a new [automated information processing platform](#) and interactive data management tool were developed and piloted in 16 UNHCR-managed camps in Cox's Bazar. The UNHCR helpline increased its response rate to calls received from 10 per cent in 2022 to 90 per cent in 2023.

Contact centres, social media and emails were used to collect and respond to feedback from forcibly displaced and stateless persons. In [Lebanon](#), the National Call Centre took 1.3 million calls from refugees. Some 150,000 emails from refugees were processed, with 30 per cent of these individuals being referred for further support. In [Libya](#), the Common Feedback Mechanism received up to 88,000 calls (a 33 per cent increase on the previous year) about cash, refugee resettlement, health and other services. It also supported 1,900 referrals for targeted protection assessments, case management and assistance packages. UNHCR also supported a hotline for registration appointments and protection emergencies. In [Ukraine](#), UNHCR increased the capacity of its partner, Donbas SOS, to manage the main UNHCR hotline, which served as FRM, receiving over 530,000 calls. In [Costa Rica](#), UNHCR Information Centre provided some 10,000 people with information assistance through its official communication channels: Toll-free Line 800-REFUGIO (4,187 people), Email Help (4,421 people), Facebook (1,031 people) and in-person visits (361 people). The AAP campaign [„¡Tu Voz Cuenta!”](#) promoted an integrated feedback mechanism so that forcibly displaced and stateless persons could submit their complaints and suggestions. The [South Africa](#) multi-country office answered more than 10,600 helpline calls in 2023, directing the callers to appropriate interventions,

operated two-way feedback email addresses in four countries and ran a [Help site](#) for refugees and asylum-seekers in South Africa. UNHCR [Pakistan](#) responded to increased interest in the multipurpose cash assistance programme by enhancing its helpline capacity, recruiting 15 new operators. The helpline saw a 125 per cent increase, as compared to 2022, in the number of people providing feedback or seeking a response; 35 per cent of the callers were women, an increase of 14 per cent compared to 2022. In response to the Sudan crisis, between April and December 2023 the Infoline service in [Egypt](#) made registration appointments for approximately 123,000 people. Following the merging of the Cairo and Alexandria information lines and the hiring of an additional 18 agents, the average number of calls taken per day tripled compared to the pre-crisis number, from 1,000 to between 2,500 and 3,000.

In parallel, UNHCR continued to use face-to-face FRM channels such as community meetings with groups of diverse age, gender and characteristics, community-based committees, community representatives, trained community focal points, and internally displaced persons or refugee councils. UNHCR [El Salvador](#) piloted a community-based complaint mechanism in two [Urban Centres for Well-being and Opportunities \(CUBO\)](#). The feedback system is managed by youth committees who run the centres in coordination with UNHCR, outreach volunteers and the State Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion. Feedback is gathered in-person, digitally and through complaint boxes.

UNHCR supported the establishment of over 100 [internally displaced persons' councils](#) in [Ukraine](#) and provided capacity support to ensure the active participation of displaced persons in decisions affecting them at the local and regional levels. In partnership with the Ministry of Reintegration, the first national forum of internally displaced persons' councils was convened in November 2023 to exchange promising practices and formulate recommendations to strengthen the councils in collaboration with local authorities and other civil society organizations.

In [Cameroon](#), improved community feedback was achieved through the establishment of 74 community-based FRMs, serving over 100 villages in 10 regions. Various methods, including phone calls, WhatsApp groups, complaint boxes and meetings with central and sectoral committees (focusing on youth, women, older persons, WASH, shelter or health activities), were used to receive complaints and address issues specific to each area. This led to positive behavioural changes in refugee, host and internally-displaced-person communities, who became more proactive in identifying and referring child abuse cases.

Community representatives served as liaisons between UNHCR and communities in [Mozambique](#) and [South Africa](#), where displaced persons received feedback through meetings with community leaders. In [Pakistan](#), community leaders were the main channel between UNHCR and women to transmit feedback on the distribution of hygiene items to women.

UNHCR and its partners gathered feedback and responded to communities through protection help desks, targeted feedback meetings, town hall meetings, FGDs, individual counselling, community outreach sessions and site/camp coordination meetings. In [Georgia](#), UNHCR organized nine thematic meetings and four townhall sessions to understand refugees' challenges and to provide them with information. To raise awareness and coordinate direct dialogue between internally displaced persons and relevant state agencies, UNHCR organized an annual information session with internally-displaced-person volunteers. In [Djibouti](#) refugees and asylum-seekers had access to feedback mechanisms including women's listening centres, in-person visits and complaint boxes.

The Tongogara Refugee Camp in [Zimbabwe](#) used multiple channels such as a suggestion box, walk-ins, WhatsApp, a help desk and community consultation sessions to gather feedback from communities. Fifty per cent of the feedback and complaints were related to water supply and WASH facilities for persons with specific access needs. In response, UNHCR and its partners installed public water taps for women and built household latrines for persons with limited mobility.



Egypt. Refugees are assisted through helpline of UNHCR partner in Alexandria. UNHCR assists refugees to access information on registration, referrals to other services, information on protection services and other needs they may have. © UNHCR/Firas Al-Khateeb



Spotlight: Persons with disabilities

Overview

In 2023, UNHCR provided targeted support to nearly 480,000 persons with disabilities. This included facilitating access to community-based rehabilitation and referrals to access assistive devices in 12 operations; cash and relief items in 16 operations; relocation of households at heightened risk to safer areas in three operations; and access to education for children with disabilities in 10 operations.

UNHCR annual monitoring data on UNHCR livelihoods programmes showed that 9 per cent of forcibly displaced persons self-reported disabilities in 2023, a 1 per cent increase from 2022 (8 per cent). The employment rate among participants with disabilities in UNHCR-supported livelihoods programmes improved by 13 percentage points, from a 62 per cent baseline to a 75 per cent endline.

Where possible, operations increasingly transitioned from providing humanitarian assistance to promoting access to [social assistance benefits for disability](#). Sixteen operations, compared to only four in 2022, supported refugees to access social assistance.

In line with the recommendations outlined in the [2022 Annual Consultation with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities](#), UNHCR collaborated

with the [International Disability Alliance](#) (IDA) to publish a discussion paper titled [Exploring the Intersectionality of International Refugee Protection and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). This paper formed the foundation for a dialogue involving IDA representatives, the [Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, the Independent Expert on the rights of persons with albinism](#), refugee law experts and the Assistant-High Commissioner for Protection.

Based on feedback gathered from people and organizations of persons with disabilities, an advocacy report titled [Disability, Displacement and Disaster Resilience: Ensuring the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Situations of Forced Displacement and Statelessness](#) was developed in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. It presents recommendations to enhance the protection and resilience of displaced persons with disabilities.

An online learning initiative for the Asia and the Pacific region targeted 16 operations, with the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities [engaged as follows by the IDA](#).



Poland. Lena Grochowska Foundation provides support for refugees from Ukraine. Ukrainian refugee Oksana, 36, works at the ceramics workshop run by the Lena Grochowska Foundation in Siedlce, Poland. She and her husband Valerii, 38, who are both wheelchair-users, are from the Chernihiv region of Ukraine where Oksana worked as a make-up artist. They now live in Siedlce, in one of the five Refugee Houses run by the Lena Grochowska Foundation.

© UNHCR/Anna Liminowicz

In the Tak province of **Thailand**, camp-based volunteers of the Community Communication Network made 377 home visits reaching 1,175 persons with disabilities and 571 caregivers and family members. These visits facilitated access to physical rehabilitation, social inclusion, MHPSS and capacity-building for camp-based self-help groups.

In **Egypt**, community support groups guided by UNHCR partners and refugee workers from the Psycho-social Services and Training Institute in Cairo reached 2,784 forcibly displaced persons with disabilities, while 1,798 persons with disabilities received assistive devices to enhance their autonomy within the community. UNHCR **Mozambique** and its partners provided assistive devices and rehabilitation services to 269 internally displaced persons and refugees with disabilities.

In **Hungary**, Cash for Protection supported 50 persons with disabilities, while in **Slovakia** over 2,000 persons with disabilities were prioritized for cash support.

Targeted education support was also provided to children with disabilities. In **Lebanon**, 1,760 children with disabilities were supported to access education. Similarly, in Dohuk, **Iraq**, UNHCR partner the Fallujah Women's Centre provided psychological support to children with cognitive disabilities to help them integrate in kindergartens. In Kigali, **Rwanda** UNHCR collaborated with the [Rwandan National Association of Deaf Women](#) to launch a pilot Rwandan sign language class for 22 deaf refugees, their families and community leaders. As a result, one graduate secured a job in a school for children with disabilities.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, UNHCR organized a [high-level dialogue](#) on persons with disabilities. Key takeaways included the need to increase support to and partnership with organizations led by displaced persons with disabilities.

UNHCR supported **partnerships with organizations led by refugees, including those led by refugees** with disabilities, in the Southern Africa region. [UMOJA People with Disabilities](#) in Dzaleka, **Malawi**, ran a project aimed at transforming the lives of forcibly displaced persons through digital inclusion; the project had 25 participants with disabilities (15 of them female), including 20 children. [Redeeming Hope for the Disabled](#) in **South Africa** implemented an empowerment project in which 30 persons with disabilities received training on servicing and repairing electronic devices, with support from the UNHCR Innovation Fund.

UNHCR facilitated the relocation of persons with disabilities in several countries. In **Ukraine**, UNHCR partners provided evacuation transportation to 5,567 individuals facing protection issues, including older persons and people with limited mobility. The relocation strategy of the Federal Government of **Brazil** for Venezuelan refugees and migrants facilitated the relocation of 531 persons at heightened risk, such as women heads of households, persons with disabilities or with serious medical conditions and older persons. UNHCR facilitated the transfer of individuals hosted in the Operação Acolhida (Operation Welcome) shelters to reception facilities managed by UNHCR partners, enabling individuals to access counselling, case management and personalized assistance in navigating public services. In Mexico, the Tú Sí Puedes project relocated recognized refugees with disabilities to strategic locations in central Mexico where they could access services through the operation's local integration programme, which supports refugees to integrate in key cities in Mexico.

► Organizational learning and adaptation (Action 5)

Interventions, planning, priority setting, course corrections and evaluation are informed on an ongoing basis by the views of forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

Core
Action 5

“At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and document this in Country Operations Plans and Annual Reporting.”

Overview

“The ultimate goal of AAP is programming that is informed by, and adapted to, the voices, perceptions and needs expressed by people with and for whom UNHCR works. It is even more important in situations of reduced funding, to ensure forcibly displaced and stateless persons are informed about and are part of the reprioritization process.”¹²

UNHCR operations actively used feedback from displaced communities to adjust programming during the year and to plan for future interventions. Documentation of [lessons learned](#) on participation and inclusion, CBP and operationalizing AAP at field level was conducted regularly, and [Promising Practices webinars](#) (UNHCR intranet page) were available for staff to share experience and discuss challenges.

Feedback gathered during mandatory post-distribution monitoring on CBIs **from more than 31,500 household interviews in 73 countries (28,000 individuals in 2022 in 52 countries) validated cash as the preferred means of assistance**, with only 4 per cent of surveyed households indicating a preference for in-kind assistance.¹³ This confirmed the aptness of the [UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions \(2022–2026\)](#), aimed at scaling up and strengthening the use of CBIs across the organization’s operations worldwide.

A survey on NFIs conducted in March 2023 in 21 countries showed that 77 per cent of the consulted operations had conducted a post-distribution monitoring exercise for NFIs within the previous year. The **outcomes of NFI post-distribution monitoring were used to inform NFI programme design in 12 of the surveyed operations**. One of the findings of the NFI post-distribution monitoring was that forcibly displaced and stateless persons were employed or volunteered in 68 per cent of NFI distributions; and 86 per cent were involved in one or more of the stages of the NFI programme planning cycle.

Based on feedback from organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, in September 2023 the value of [UNHCR Grant Agreements with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons](#) was increased to a maximum amount of \$12,000, from the initial amount of \$4,000 piloted in 2021.

The [Ethical Communication Guidelines](#) were developed by the UNHCR Division of External Relations based on feedback from refugee men and women from Africa, South America, the Middle East and Europe who took part in the [Refugee Journalism Mentorship Programme](#). Dedicated online sessions were held with the group during the development of the guidelines, enabling refugees with communication and advocacy experience to provide inputs.

¹² [AAP Operational Guidance \(UNHCR\)](#)

¹³ [Cash Assistance in 2023: Main Outcomes from Post Distribution Monitoring \(UNHCR\)](#)

Application of organizational learning and adaptation at the field level

UNHCR operations in the Americas, Southern Africa and MENA further adapted their programmes and interventions to better respond to the needs of population on the move, informed by first-hand accounts from asylum-seekers and migrants gathered during the past years. These accounts revealed experiences of torture, violence, detention and forced labour.¹⁴ In response, UNHCR has advocated with donors and States to ensure it has the funding to consistently support persons on the move along mixed movement routes, providing essential services and life-saving interventions for survivors of trafficking and other forms of violence, abuse and exploitation.¹⁵

In the **Americas**, where increased population movements exposed to significant protection risks were recorded in the [Darién jungle](#), the launch of the [Safe Mobility Portals](#) was an important shift in the regional strategy towards access to protection and the facilitation of third-country solutions to persons on the move. The portals covered **Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia and Ecuador** and by December 2023, applications from more than 120,000 individuals had been received (with AGD-disaggregated data available) and more than 100,000 individuals had been referred to UNHCR. UNHCR also gathered feedback through the portals to improve messaging on the application process for the Safe Mobility programme. These experiences and the forward-thinking approach, in which UNHCR started to systematically invest in 2023, are now informing the organization's work to develop a unified solution for digital services, the **Digital Gateway**, and are also informing the discussion on the route-based approach.

As mixed movements increased and became more complex, operations increased monitoring and analysis. In **Southern Africa**, a regional questionnaire on onward movement gathered and analysed AGD data through protection monitoring and mapping of service providers along the route.

The **MENA Bureau** expanded its support to people on the move in North African countries. Among other actions, it expanded the [MENA Community Protection Network](#) to 115 members, comprising community, refugee-led, women-led and youth-led organizations, as well as NGOs, United Nations agencies and national institutions. Members were trained on [disclosing and identifying international protection needs](#), to support

the referral of people in need of international protection and those with other specific needs to protection and multisectoral services.

In country and field offices, UNHCR staff acted upon feedback gathered from assessments and consultations with displaced populations, using it to reprioritize interventions and direct their advocacy work with authorities. The **South Africa** multi-country office [Engagement Report](#) included a summary of how the 2023 Participatory Assessment recommendations on each of the 10 thematic topics selected for the assessments have been prioritized in programming. Results were shared with partners and other stakeholders to help them design projects. The livelihoods, GBV and child protection strategies were revised based on recommendations from the report, and AGD findings were used to draft funding proposals on social cohesion in South Africa and for the Safe from the Start programme in **Botswana**.

UNHCR **Mozambique's** 2023 Protection monitoring reports, with AGD-disaggregated protection data on internally displaced persons, informed programming throughout the year and into 2024. This was achieved thanks to trained community activists from the internally displaced persons and host communities, establishing a UNHCR protection pillar (CBP) in the country.

In **Rwanda**, participatory feedback sessions with refugee community members revealed the need for safer, private and accessible bathing areas and latrines in refugee sites. In response, 600 solar streetlights were installed near WASH facilities.

In **Yemen**, participatory assessments and consultations with asylum-seekers and refugees influenced UNHCR advocacy with the authorities on priority interventions such as the resumption of birth registrations and population verifications to provide documentation, and informed the resumption of voluntary returns to Somalia and Ethiopia.

In the **United States of America**, UNHCR visited various cities to research best practices in asylum-seeker reception, holding consultations with asylum-seekers in each city. The feedback collected was incorporated into the [Toolkit on Asylum-Seeker Reception](#).

UNHCR **Sri Lanka** conducted a survey among asylum-seekers and refugees to identify livelihood gaps and

¹⁴ [On this Journey, No One Cares if You Live or Die': Abuse, Protection, and Justice along Routes between East and West Africa and Africa's Mediterranean Coast \(Mixed Migration Centre and UNHCR\); On this Journey, No One Cares if you Live or Die: Volume 2 \(UNHCR, International Organization for Migration and Mixed Migration Centre\).](#)

¹⁵ [Mapping of Protection Services: A Routes-Based Approach to Protection Services along Mixed Movement Routes \(UNHCR\).](#)

design a response. As a result, individuals received language classes and training in entrepreneurial skills aimed at enhancing their prospects for future livelihood opportunities.

In [Guyana](#), [HIAS](#) and UNHCR conducted FGDs with Indigenous women and girls on GBV risks. One of the main risks identified was male violence when women and girls bathe in the open air and when they walk alone at night. In response, UNHCR purchased and delivered individual alarms, shower tents and folding screens to improve privacy.

To understand the root causes of child protection risks in refugee camps in [Zimbabwe](#), child protection actors conducted three participatory assessments centred on child labour and child safeguarding through a Knowledge, Attitude and Practice survey, interviewing 439 persons including 178 children (110 girls, 68 boys) and 261 caregivers (103 male, 158 female). In

response to the findings, child-led committees and girl's empowerment, sports and clean-up campaigns were initiated, reaching almost 3,700 children.

UNHCR used multipurpose grants to scale up cash transfers in [Myanmar](#), to enable internally displaced persons to meet their basic needs. These transfers were especially critical in high conflict zones with limited humanitarian access due to insecurity. UNHCR initially used cash-in-hand distributions but following feedback from internally displaced persons it contracted a mobile money company to improve delivery.

Feedback from participatory assessments in [Ecuador](#), [Mozambique](#) and [Ethiopia](#) and the UNHCR [Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2026](#) were used to develop [Digital Changemakers Lab](#) projects, which build digital skills and strengthen information access for displaced persons.



Niger. Falmata Kaou a refugee from Nigeria, produces soap in Sayam forage camp. The Nigerian NGO „Bien Faire pour les Femmes Rurales” is supporting five women's groups in the Sayam Forage refugee camp in the artisanal production of solid and liquid soap. This support also includes an organisational and financial management component. © UNHCR/Colin Delfosse



Spotlight: Older persons

Overview

Older refugees make up 3 per cent of all forcibly displaced and stateless persons. They remain one of the most at-risk populations. In 2023, UNHCR provided targeted support to nearly 41,000 older persons, including access to health, food, psychosocial support and livelihood opportunities.

UNHCR published [Facilitator's Guide: Working with Older Persons in Forced Displacement](#), building on the 2021 report [A Claim to Dignity: Ageing on the Move](#). In collaboration with the [United Nations Institute for Training and Research](#), the Division of International Protection ran a global webinar, addressed to United Nations staff, titled [Access](#)

[to Health and Social Care Services: Further Vulnerabilities Merging from Ageing](#). Presenters discussed the challenges faced by displaced older persons in different regions, highlighted barriers to accessing national systems such as health and social protection, and emphasized the potential of older persons to contribute to societies globally.

UNHCR estimated that 9 per cent of individuals supported with UNHCR livelihood programmes in 2023 were living in households with at least one member aged 65 years or older. This statistic has remained stable since 2022.



Syria. Older women enjoy the elderly club activities at UNHCR-supported community in AIMliha, Eastern Ghouta. © UNHCR/ Vivian Tou'meh

Cash assistance prioritizing older persons as recipients continued to be applied in the Ukraine response. In [Hungary](#), cash for winter needs supported 458 older persons (73 per cent of them women). In [Slovakia](#), refugees were consulted about CBIs to identify the groups at highest risk. The CBI programme was then designed based on their recommendations, with older persons among the prioritized groups. As a result, 3,600 older persons received cash assistance. Targeted NFI and cash support for older refugees was also provided in the [United Republic of Tanzania](#).

UNHCR operations advocated the inclusion of displaced older persons in national systems. In [Costa Rica](#), UNHCR engaged with the National Council for Older People to advocate collaboration on a new referral pathway to strengthen displaced older persons' access to national services.

Social inclusion and social cohesion for displaced older persons were also included in projects. In [El Salvador](#), the “Morning or Afternoon Coffee” programme held at the Colonia IVU, Emmanuel and Zacamil community centres ([CUBO](#)) focused on older persons, offering a series of interventions centred on mental health. These included cognitive and behavioural skills enhancement; awareness-raising to demystify mental health; emotional intelligence; and the fostering of healthy interpersonal relationships to improve social coexistence among older persons in the communities.

In the [United Republic of Tanzania](#), based on feedback from previous participatory assessments, UNHCR provided intensive training for family members and caregivers on home-based care techniques, to support older persons and households with family members with disabilities.

Livelihoods interventions addressed to older persons were implemented in several countries. In [India](#), eight self-starting community-based projects

around skills development, education support and the emotional well-being of older persons reached 578 individuals. In Paraguaipoa, in the State of Zulia, the [Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela](#), UNHCR supported the United Women Weaving Dreams initiative, which brought together 50 Indigenous [Wayúu weavers](#) of all ages to produce traditional products. The initiative provided weavers with resources – such as a thread cone bank,¹⁶ which older Wayúu women who possessed traditional weaving skills used to pass knowledge on to younger generations participating in the project, as well as training and a platform to sell their handicrafts.

In operations such as [Rwanda](#), where older persons were deemed ineligible for livelihood projects due to their age, feedback was gathered to inform more inclusive programming in the future. During consultations with UNHCR, older persons requested the removal of the 60+ age restriction in livelihood programmes, to allow them to benefit from these opportunities as well.

In the [Syrian Arab Republic](#), UNHCR facilitated training on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons for 160,000 staff and community volunteers working in 120 UNHCR community centres across the country. The training was key to improving access to information and services for these population groups and will be replicated regularly. Additionally, **older persons' clubs** were established by UNHCR and its partners in each community centre to support the integration of older persons. These clubs' activities included social events and games, inter-generation meetings, awareness sessions on protection and health services, psychodrama and music. Furthermore, the UNHCR home-based rehabilitation programme provided support to **2,335 persons with disabilities and 7,190 older persons** and their caregivers. In addition, **17,740 older persons with severe health situations and people with specific types of disabilities** received adult incontinence materials.

¹⁶ A thread cone bank is a storage and organization system used in sewing, embroidery and other textile-related activities. It is designed to hold multiple thread cones, which are larger spools of thread typically used in industrial or large-scale sewing and embroidery projects.



Mexico. Women refugees and local community members participate in a workshop on dignified menstruation. This is a joint activity involving UNHCR, the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED), the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR), the Government of Mexico City, and civil society through the Casa Refugiados Program (PCR). © UNHCR/Ivan Stephens

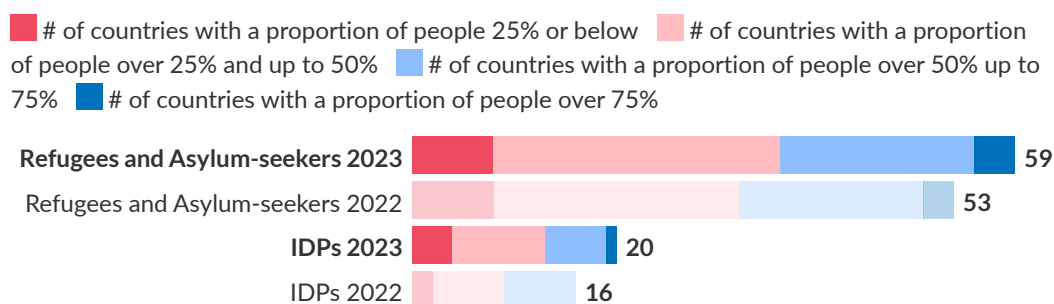
► I.iii Advancing gender equality (Action 6A-E)

[UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022–2026](#) recognizes gender equality as central to UNHCR’s work. It specifically highlights that accountability to women and prevention and response to GBV are priority areas for additional, accelerated and targeted action. Of the 16 outcome areas in UNHCR’s Global Results Framework, [outcome area 4](#) “Gender-based violence” and [outcome area 7](#) “Community engagement and women’s empowerment” specifically relate to gender equality, the empowerment of women, and to [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 5](#). To operationalize gender equality interventions, \$146 million (3 per cent of overall UNHCR expenditures) was allocated to specialized GBV prevention and response programming, with \$57 million directed to UNHCR partners. [Pakistan](#), [Somalia](#), [Lebanon](#) and [Ethiopia](#)

were among the top UNHCR country operations that benefited from these expenditures. Community empowerment, including women’s empowerment, accounted for \$316 million expenditures with a slight increase from 2022, and with country operations such as [Ukraine](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Afghanistan](#) and [Lebanon](#) at the forefront.

[Gender Equality Promising and Emerging Practices: From Inspiration to Implementation](#) outlines the various interventions made by UNHCR in country operations towards the inclusion of women and girls in education, health care, the labour market and community leadership.

Figure 4. Proportion of women participating in leadership and management structures



Source: [Community engagement and women’s empowerment | Global Focus \(unhcr.org\)](#)

▶ Women and girls' participation and inclusion (Action 6a)

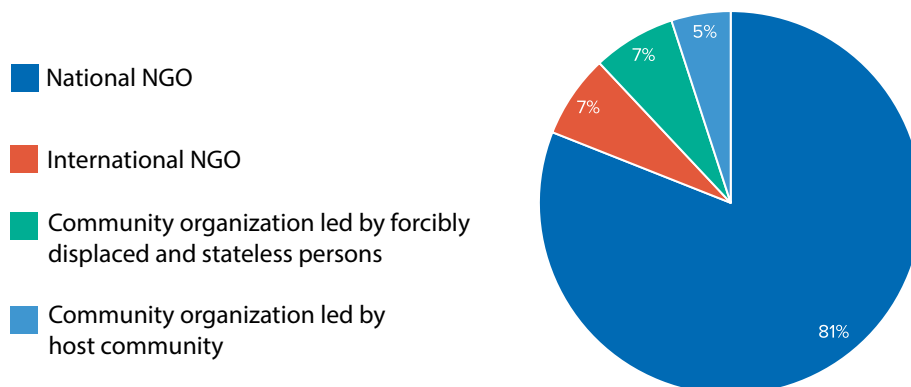
Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management, leadership structures and committees of forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

Core
Action 6A

“At a minimum, UNHCR operations will ensure 50 per cent female participants in management and leadership structures under UNHCR’s authority, and will advocate the same with partners, including Governments.

UNHCR continued to promote women and girls' equal representation in leadership and management structures led by displaced people. In 40 per cent of the reporting countries, women comprised more than half of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the existing leadership and management structures.

Figure 5. Analysis of women-led organizations funded by UNHCR



UNHCR provided funding and capacity support for organizations led by forcibly displaced women and women-led organizations.¹⁷ Twenty-one per cent (261) of partnerships funded by UNHCR self-defined on the UN Partner Portal as women-led. Of these, 7 per cent (18) were led by forcibly displaced and stateless women.

In addition to its internal funding mechanisms, including [UNHCR Grant Agreements with Organizations Led by Displaced and Stateless Persons](#) and the [RLIF](#), UNHCR advocated externally for funding. This was aimed at financing organizations led by displaced women, including through the [Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund](#), of which UNHCR became the Funding Board rotating chair in late 2023.

In 2023, the [RLIF](#) provided funding, mentoring and technical expertise to six organizations led by forcibly displaced women that were selected for the award in 2022. In addition, seven women-led organizations (three led by refugee women) were trained at the [Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp](#), which aimed to provide skills and resources to bridge the digital gender gap and promote [digital gender equality](#). Two women-led organizations with participants from [Iraq](#) and the [Syrian Arab Republic](#) were selected for seed funding to pilot digital inclusion projects. These projects promoted [Digital Gender Equality](#), thereby enhancing safe Internet access for women and girls, supporting women and girls' empowerment and contributing to reduce the gender digital gap.

¹⁷ Women-led organization: An organization with a humanitarian mandate and/or mission that (1) is governed or directed by women; or (2) whose leadership is principally made up of women, demonstrated by 50 per cent or more occupying senior leadership positions (see [IASC Gender Reference Group Guidance Note](#)).

Efforts to enhance gender inclusivity in humanitarian responses led to greater involvement of women-led organizations in refugee coordination structures. Six such organizations co-chaired in five countries, and 147 participated in coordination mechanisms against GBV. This marked a 67 per cent increase compared to the 2022 results.

UNHCR field practices for women and girls' participation

Through increased awareness-raising and capacity-building on gender equality and women's rights, the equal participation of women in leadership and decision-making structures was achieved in **Kenya, Bangladesh** and **Djibouti**. The regional bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes reported that women are represented in 47 per cent of leadership and management structures, just under the 50 per cent target. A promising increase towards women's equal representation in leadership structures was observed in countries such as **Uganda, Nigeria** and **Egypt**, where parity was not yet reached.

Increased women's involvement in leadership led to strong advocacy for women's and girl's rights. In **Cameroon**, 53 per cent of female refugee participants were included in leadership structures, highlighting a 45 per cent increase from 2022. In the Logone-Birni district, Cameroonian women were recognized as members of customary courts, property owners and village leaders. In **Niger**, to strengthen female leadership, awareness-raising campaigns were conducted to encourage involvement of women in decision-making structures, leading to a 46 per cent participation rate compared to 44 per cent in 2022. In **Mozambique**, women's committees were established in centres for internally displaced persons. Each committee composed of 10–15 women, including influential community members and survivors of Gender-Based Violence who have participated in empowerment sessions.

In the Americas, UNHCR advocated for the participation of forcibly displaced women and girls in the Regional Congress on Women, held within the framework of the Regional Conference on Migration in Panama. The conference concluded with an [extraordinary declaration](#), committing to eradicate discrimination and violence against women and girls and to promote their economic and social empowerment.

Diversified funding mechanisms allowed for direct support to women's organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. This was often followed by capacity support efforts by UNHCR to strengthen the project management capabilities of those women-led organizations. At a regional level, \$40,000 was made available by the UNHCR Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes from the [PROSPECTS Partnership](#)'s multi-annual global and

regional programme, to enhance AAP and promote gender equality. Through this fund, operations in **Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan** and **Uganda** provided small grants to local women-led organizations. Among the grantees were Community-Based Organizations led by forcibly displaced women working on gender equality and the prevention of GBV. In **South Africa**, women-led refugee organizations were supported in applying for funding, resulting in two women-led organizations winning the [UNHCR Innovation Fund: People Against Suffering, Suppression, Oppression, and Poverty](#) and [Redeeming Hope for the Disabled](#) funding. The Bureau for Asia and the Pacific supported 10 refugee women-led organizations in **Malaysia** and **Indonesia** to address GBV risks and to strengthen the resilience of women and girls. Following their capacity-building through the Refugee Women and Girls Project, with UNHCR's technical support, female managers of the organizations also received support and training to strengthen their leadership and skills. By the end of 2023, seven women-led organizations in **Malaysia** formed a consortium focused on interventions for improving women's livelihoods, following support from the project. This collaboration resulted in funding from donors beyond UNHCR.

In **Uganda**, five refugee women-led organizations received a grant under UNHCR allocation from the [Central Emergency Response Fund](#) to implement activities in prevention of and response to GBV. In **Italy**, gender equality was reflected in prioritized interventions addressing GBV. Additionally, there was an increased number of women-led refugee organizations receiving funding through the [Partecipazione](#) project, a networking, capacity-building and empowerment programme by INTERSOS and UNHCR. Projects included a community help desk, social and recreational activities, guidance on legal documentation and targeted advocacy for Afghan women and girls on health-care access.

Capacity development of women-led organizations was supported in several operations. In Cairo, **Egypt**, these efforts led to an increase in female representation in Refugee-Led Organizations, rising to 38 per cent in 2023 from 28 per cent in 2022. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR supported five women-led organizations through case management training on GBV case management, working with survivors, cash support and international refugee protection, which resulted in improved service provision and quality referrals. UNHCR Medellín in **Colombia** strengthened six community-based women's organizations with refugee and Indigenous members. UNHCR **Guatemala** continued to strengthen the community protection network led by women in the Departments of Izabal and Alta Verapaz, known as Protection Agents (*Agentas de Protección*), by supporting their leadership, organization and knowledge. These *Agentas de Protección* served to empower other women, acting as responsible authorities and as liaisons between communities at risk, particularly Indigenous communities.



Spotlight: LGBTIQ+ persons

Overview

LGBTIQ+ persons continue to face protection risks worldwide, with 61 countries criminalizing de jure or de facto consensual same-sex sexual acts, and seven applying the death penalty.¹⁸ Further regressive policies have also been adopted in several countries. UNHCR continued to consolidate its work in support of forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ persons through key strategic areas:¹⁹

- partnerships and engagement with LGBTIQ+ local organizations, including those led by forcibly displaced persons;
- capacity development of workforce and partners through training and guidance on SOGIESC concepts, respectful communication and LGBTIQ+-inclusive programming;
- improving systems and processes for ethical, safe and proportional collection and recording of SOGIESC data; and
- pursuing strategic advocacy with various stakeholders to ensure respect for the right to seek asylum.

In early 2023, UNHCR undertook a [stocktaking of the organization's progress](#) since the 2021 Global Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ Persons in Forced Displacement. The [findings](#) were presented to NGOs and activists during a dialogue organized with the [United Nations Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity](#), which was held in Geneva on 22 June 2023.

An internal analysis revealed that 38 out of 106 UNHCR operations included LGBTIQ+ persons in their country strategies, and 20 of 76 countries reported having included consultations with LGBTIQ+ persons in participatory assessments. Of the country operations using the [UNHCR Livelihoods Information System](#), 40 per cent reported having included LGBTIQ+ persons in livelihoods and economic inclusion programmes, an increase from 25 per cent in 2022.

UNHCR continues to invest in the capacity-building of its staff. The UNHCR [LGBTIQ+ online course](#) “[Working with LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement](#)” was translated into French and [Spanish](#), and was completed by over 1,300 learners by the end of 2023 (up from over 800 in 2022).

UNHCR consistently incorporated elements of diverse SOGIESC into guidance documents, such as the International Protection Considerations and Eligibility Guidelines.²⁰ As part of the [UN Free & Equal campaign](#), UNHCR co-authored a fact sheet on [refuge and asylum](#), outlining challenges faced by people with diverse SOGIESC, the right to seek asylum, SOGIESC-based claims and key advocacy messages for States.



Honduras. Community for internally displaced Norman proudly and joyfully poses in her San Miguel de Guancapla costume. She has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first transgender woman to be certified as a Honduran folklore dancer.

© UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

¹⁸ [Criminalisation of Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Acts \(ILGA World\)](#)

¹⁹ [UNHCR Priorities on Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement \(UNHCR\)](#)

²⁰ [International Protection Considerations with Regard to People fleeing Nicaragua \(UNHCR\)](#); [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan \(Update I\) \(UNHCR\)](#); [International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing Colombia \(UNHCR\)](#)

In addition to advocacy and working towards inclusive programmes, several UNHCR operations actively engaged with LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations through coordination and referral to support LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons' access to safe spaces and protection services; and reliable information on rights and asylum procedures.

In **Peru**, LGBTIQ+ persons facing discrimination and exclusion found a safe space in the [Casa de la Diversidad](#) in Arequipa. The “House of Diversity” provides essential services such as accommodation for vulnerable LGBTIQ+ populations, guidance on accessing health and legal services, testing for human immunodeficiency virus, and psychological care.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, UNHCR collaborated with organizations supporting LGBTIQ+ persons, holding FGDs with LGBTIQ+ asylum-seekers and including services in its community centres.

In **Kenya**, two Refugee-Led Organizations, [Freedom House Initiative](#) and [Community Empowerment and Self-Support Organization](#), are providing immediate shelter and livelihood support for LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR in the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** supported the LGBTIQ+ community centre in Mérida, the only shelter for forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ persons in the country. The centre provides comprehensive and dignified support to LGBTIQ+ persons, among other tailored services to address specific needs within populations at risk.

UNHCR **El Salvador** organized a network of 21 LGBTIQ+ outreach volunteers to improve communication with forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ people; support safe identification and referral; map safe structures; and assess community needs, capacities and proposed solutions.

UNHCR supported its partner [COMCAVIS TRANS](#) in opening an LGBTIQ+ community centre (COPITO) in San Salvador, with over 1,000 LGBTIQ+ persons accessing the centre in 2023. The COPITO centre is a safe space where LGBTIQ+ persons can access information, specialized services and vocational training. Through the “Bridging the Gap” project, 51 trans women in El Salvador were supported in earning their high school degrees.

Several operations focused on staff training to act as focal points on SOGIESC. In the MENA region, an online diversity learning series was held for 150 front-line UNHCR and partner staff. The webinar discussed safe spaces, intersectionality, inclusion, and recording SOGIESC and disability data in UNHCR's proGres database. Similarly, in **Malaysia**, all case processing staff were trained on promoting inclusive approaches and LGBTIQ+ safe spaces. Service providers at NGOs were regularly consulted to strengthen referral pathways for LGBTIQ+ persons at heightened risks.

In **South Africa**, through the grant awarded by the RLIF, [People Against Suffering, Suppression, Oppression, and Poverty](#) launched a series of initiatives to facilitate regular, positive contact among LGBTIQ+ refugees, host community members and leaders. Through safe community gatherings and education initiatives, South African nationals had the opportunity to meet LGBTIQ+ refugees, hear their stories and understand their rights.

In the **Southern Africa region**, the UNHCR Regional Bureau organized a three-day workshop with participants from all UNHCR operations in the region and with LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations. The exchange was instrumental in shaping a multi-year action plan (2023–2025) for the region to advance protection and solutions for displaced LGBTIQ+ individuals.



Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR introduces biometric registration of IDPs in response to M23 crisis to improve data management. Thanks to tokens drawn from a biometric database, beneficiary verification becomes quicker and easier. © UNHCR/Blaise Sanyila

▶ Individual registration and documentation (Action 6b)

Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.

Core
Action 6B

“At a minimum, UNHCR will provide women and girls with protection documentation on an individual basis, and will advocate the same with partners, including Governments.”

Overview

In 2023, approximately 2.5 million people were registered in 135 countries where UNHCR supported registration and individual documentation. Women and girls accounted for 54 per cent of new individuals registered in proGres who were issued with individual documents.

In June 2023, UNHCR, in partnership with the [Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights](#), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and UN-Women, co-sponsored the [Global Summit on Gender Equality in Nationality Laws](#). The summit aimed to promote gender equality and advocate for the elimination of discrimination in nationality laws that prevent women and children from accessing personal documentation and other rights. During the event, UNHCR outlined ways in which

inequality between men and women in nationality laws contributes to statelessness, and proposed [five actions](#) that governments, NGOs and the United Nations system can take to address discrimination and achieve gender equality in nationality laws.

Demographic information available for 79 per cent of the 4.4 million stateless persons indicates that women account for 53 per cent of the stateless population. UNHCR’s [#IBelong campaign](#), launched in 2014 with the goal of ending statelessness within 10 years, envisaged the achievement of gender equality in all nationality laws by 2024. However, as of mid-2023 nationality laws in 24 States still did not grant mothers equal rights as fathers to confer their nationality to their children. This issue persists in 12 countries in the MENA region, five countries in sub-Saharan Africa, five countries in Asia and the Pacific, and two States in the Caribbean.²¹

²¹ [Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2024 \(UNHCR\)](#)

UNHCR practices for the registration and documentation of women and girls

In situations where UNHCR led the refugee responses, individual registration and documentation for women and girls were standard practices. In **India**, women and girls were registered individually, and those at heightened risk (including LGBTIQ+ persons) were fast-tracked for registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD), reducing risks of being undocumented. In **Nepal**, UNHCR provided documentation to all urban refugees and asylum-seekers, including women and girls, facilitating equal access to health and education.

The [Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2024](#) provides examples of the 2023 achievements in advancing women's equal rights to confer nationality to their children. In Liberia, the Alien and Nationality Law was revised, resulting in Liberian women being able to pass their nationality to their children, on equal terms with men. In February 2023, the Government of **Malaysia** announced an amendment to the Constitution, granting Malaysian women the right to confer their nationality to their overseas-born children. The proposal to reform the citizenship provisions of

the Constitution also contains amendments that seek to remove safeguards for children born on the territory who would otherwise be stateless.

UNHCR in the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** promoted women's empowerment and community mobilization supporting civil registration brigades in Indigenous communities. The brigades provided Indigenous women with information and legal assistance to facilitate their children's birth registration and access to other rights.

In the context of internally displaced persons in **Mozambique**, UNHCR and its partners implemented a civil documentation caravan that served as a "one-stop-shop" to provide legal aid and facilitate the issuance of birth certificates and national identity documents. In eight districts of Cabo Delgado Province, Nampula and Niassa Province, nearly 15,000 individuals (over 50 per cent being women) were provided with birth certificates and identity documents by the authorities. Information on the importance of birth registration and civil documentation was disseminated through community radio.

Statelessness

It is estimated that the world still hosts 4.4 million stateless persons.²² Seventy-five per cent of the world's stateless persons belong to minority groups. In line with the objectives of the 10-year [#IBelong campaign](#) launched in 2014 and the accompanying [global action plan](#), approximately 32,200 stateless persons gained nationality in 2023.

UNHCR continued its global-, regional- and country-level advocacy to reform nationality laws that are gender discriminatory and prevent women from conferring nationality to their children on an equal basis as men. This was still the case in 24 countries worldwide at the end of 2023. To prevent statelessness among children, UNHCR continued to advocate for revisions in national legislation while also actively supporting States in the issuance of birth certificates.

Field practices

The RLIF supported **Italy's** first stateless-led organization, [Unione Italiana Apolidi](#), to create a toolkit for raising awareness on statelessness at universities. UNHCR in Italy also continued to support the [Tavolo Apolidia](#), a network of NGOs and experts working on statelessness. In the **United States of America**, UNHCR continued to provide assistance to and work alongside [United Stateless](#), an organization led by stateless persons providing legal, case management, advocacy and community support to its stateless members. UNHCR supported with institutional and legal capacity-building, as well as MHPSS for members.

Operations – including those in **Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan and Zimbabwe** – conducted participatory assessment exercises with stateless persons to understand their needs, capacities and proposed solutions.

²² [Global Report 2023: Statelessness \(UNHCR\)](#)

As part of the stateless campaign, UNHCR supported countries in Central Asia that were demonstrating continuous commitment, reducing statelessness by 17 per cent. In 2023, more than 10,000 people obtained or confirmed their nationality through the adoption of laws that prevented child statelessness. **Kazakhstan** granted citizenship to 2,240 stateless persons; **Turkmenistan** to 1,301 stateless persons; the **Kyrgyzstan** to 277 stateless persons; Tajikistan to 3,390 stateless persons (76 per cent being women and girls); and **Uzbekistan** recognized 4,993 stateless persons as citizens. **Kyrgyzstan** revised its laws to prevent statelessness in citizenship renunciation and to ensure universal birth registration for all children born in the country.

As part of the statelessness-prevention activities in the Diffa region of **Niger**, UNHCR and its partners facilitated the issuance by the authorities of 3,015 birth certificates for children up to six years of age, whose birth was not registered within the government-set time frame. In addition, 2,070 birth certificates were provided to adults who had no civil documentation and were at risk of statelessness; of these, 1,129 were women.

UNHCR **Mozambique's** civil documentation programme mitigated the risk of statelessness for almost 15,000

internally displaced persons whose legal documents were lost or destroyed during the armed conflict; over half were children.

The **Kenya** UNHCR country operation together with the **Haki Centre** and the Government of Kenya, have been working with the Pemba, Rundi and Rwandan minority and stateless communities to develop **community self-registers**. The community self-registers are used in advocacy and naturalization processes to facilitate acquisition of nationality by stateless persons, and to provide data on stateless persons in the country.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, the issuance of birth registration and certification contributed to the prevention and reduction of statelessness. UNHCR worked and collaborated with the line ministers, refugee authorities, and health and child protection partners. By the end of 2023, 9,464 children – 88 per cent of the 10,800 target – received birth certificates.

To prevent statelessness in the **Republic of Moldova**, the parliament passed legislation granting Moldovan citizenship to children born on Moldovan territory who would otherwise be stateless. UNHCR advocated for this legislation with written comments to parliament, a joint advocacy letter with UNICEF and recommendations during public consultations.



As part of efforts to end stateless in Kenya, Barke goes door to door educating women on the importance of getting birth certificates and helps them fill in the forms for their children. © UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

► Equal access to and control over assistance (Action 6c)

Women and girls have equal access to and control over the management and provision of food, core relief items and Cash-Based Interventions.

Core
Action 6C

“Depending on the context, UNHCR operations will increase the percentage of women as the primary recipients of assistance within households receiving material and/or cash-based assistance.”

Overview

Participation and inclusion of women and girls are central to the [UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2022-2026](#) and in the modalities of delivery of CBIs. In the 110 operations where UNHCR delivered cash assistance, particularly multipurpose cash, 54 per cent of the 7.3 million recipients of cash assistance were women, an increase from 51 per cent in 2022. The standard post-distribution monitoring report for CBIs has also been expanded to include questions to assess the specific impact of cash assistance on women and girls.

UNHCR practices on access, control and management of food, relief and cash-based interventions

In **Jordan**, the [2023 Post Distribution Monitoring Report](#) on Cash-Based Interventions separately analysed the process and impact of CBI on women respondents to adjust cash programming. The assessment, for instance, reported that women, regardless of age, were consistently more likely to seek assistance in withdrawing cash compared to men. In **Albania**, women were the primary recipients of assistance within households, accounting for 53 per cent of cash recipients, up from 48 per cent in 2022. In **Ecuador**, 94 per cent of cash assistance was distributed to women, including where households were male-headed. First-hand accounts from forcibly displaced women confirmed that cash helped them to meet their basic needs and to gain financial independence. In **India**, sectoral cash assistance was provided to 314 women at risk, to 134 Rohingya women for hospital deliveries and

to 925 Rohingya girls towards school enrolment. In the **Republic of Moldova**, forcibly displaced women and girls with disabilities made up 50 per cent of the cash recipients with disabilities.

In **Uganda**, UNHCR provided cash grants to women at risk and survivors of Gender-Based Violence. The recipients received a SIM card and a one-off cash grant to a personal mobile money account, a modality of payment that promoted their financial and digital inclusion and encouraged them to apply for identity documents. The women who benefited from cash assistance also received training in financial literacy. Post-distribution CBI monitoring findings highlighted that cash was used to cover basic needs, with 78 per cent using it for food, 44 per cent using it for clothes/shoes and 43 per cent using it for health/medicine. Forty-eight per cent of respondents used cash for their livelihoods. In **Egypt**, UNHCR and [Caritas](#) provided 805 pregnant women with targeted cash assistance to access safe delivery in hospitals. In **Colombia**, UNHCR prioritized Cash-Based interventions for female survivors of Gender-Based Violence in UNHCR-supported safe houses.



Sahrawi refugee girls receive warm clothes from UNHCR.
© UNHCR/Eunice Ohanusi

► Equal access to economic opportunities, health and education (Action 6D)

Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, including decent work and quality education and services.

Core
Action 6D

“At a minimum, UNHCR will ensure women and girls have equal access to the livelihood, education, and health programmes it delivers, and it will advocate with partners, including Governments, for their equal access to public services.”

In 2023, 53 per cent of participants in livelihood and economic interventions were women.²³ Gender analysis on how forcibly displaced women are particularly affected by displacement was documented in UNHCR country reports and the [UNHCR Global Survey on Livelihoods](#). This survey covered 132 countries, highlighting specific barriers faced by displaced women to access employment.

Through [MADE51](#) – the UNHCR global collaborative initiative to connect fair-trade refugee-made products with international markets – 38 local social enterprise partners in 23 countries worked directly with over 3,300 refugee and host community artisans. Approximately 94 per cent of the refugee artisans were women (up from 85 per cent in 2022).

Of the 9.24 million health consultations in refugee sites provided by UNHCR partners, 58 per cent were with women.²⁴ Almost 1.5 million women and girls received sexual and reproductive health services; over 112,000 deliveries were recorded in the [Integrated Refugee Health Information System](#), with 93 per cent conducted by a skilled attendant, while 79 per cent of women received complete antenatal care (a 7 per cent increase from 2022). Thirty-eight operations trained health providers in the clinical management of rape, up from 23 in 2022. Approximately 11,500 community health workers, 54 per cent being women, fostered healthy living, supported emergency response during communicable disease outbreaks, provided basic treatment and linked refugees to health facilities and other services in 36 operations. At the community level, more than 6,000 mother-to-mother support groups were facilitated by community volunteers to provide peer support on feeding infants and young children.

UNHCR continued to work towards equitable access to quality education, empowering displaced and stateless girls and women, breaking cycles of poverty, improving economic inclusion, narrowing disparities and reducing gender inequalities in the long term. Of the countries providing disaggregated gender data in education statistics for refugees, the average primary school enrolment rate for boys was 66 per cent, while for girls it was 63 per cent. At the secondary-education level, the corresponding figures were 41 per cent for boys and 38 per cent for girls. While progress continues, clear disparities in refugee girls' enrolment are still observed in comparison with national averages at both primary and secondary levels. In primary education, UNHCR – through [Educate a Child](#), supported by the [Education Above All Foundation](#) – facilitated the enrolment of out-of-school girls and boys into primary education across 14 UNHCR operations in Africa, Asia, the MENA region and the Americas. In 2023, the programme enrolled 34,143 out-of-school children, with girls comprising 45 per cent. Regarding higher education, approximately 4 million of the 31.6 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate are aged 18 to 24, yet only 7 per cent have access to university or other higher-educational institutions. The [DAFI Tertiary Scholarship Programme](#) aims to expand higher education opportunities and achieve gender parity in line with [UNHCR's 2030 refugee-education strategy](#), as a means of promoting [access to higher education for forcibly displaced women](#). Last year, over 9,300 refugee students from 54 countries of origin were enrolled in DAFI scholarships in 59 countries. Women represented 42 per cent of the total, and achieving gender parity remains a core aim of the programme.

²³ [Livelihoods Information System \(UNHCR\)](#)

²⁴ [Annual Public Health Global Review 2023 \(UNHCR\)](#)

UNHCR field practices on access to opportunities

Several operations implemented targeted livelihood programming to support women. In **South Sudan**, self-reliance opportunities for women and girls were strengthened through skills training in bakery, tailoring, stove making and vegetable gardening. Economic empowerment was supported via [Village Saving and Loans Associations](#), empowering women with loans and business-management skills to build resilience and overcome challenges, including during flooding. In **Argentina**, the [Buenos Aires Nosotras Conectadas](#) Programme trained 206 forcibly displaced women in programming and digital marketing between 2021–2023. This addressed human-resource gaps in the digital marketing sector and provided displaced women with opportunities to work in the technology sector. UNHCR **Mozambique** supported almost 1,500 internally displaced persons with livelihoods, maintaining a gender balance in vocational trainings, business skills, financial literacy training, entrepreneurship and business grants.

Health-care interventions by UNHCR and partners addressed the specific needs of women and girls, especially sexual and reproductive health. In **Malawi**, UNHCR established “Empower Her: Women’s Transformation Network” as a platform for women to share experiences and find sustainable solutions to their needs. Through this initiative, women and girls were oriented on GBV issues, reporting mechanisms, and sexual and reproductive health resources available in the Dzaleka refugee camp. This also resulted in unhindered access to oral contraceptives. In **Bangladesh**, community health workers – 71 per cent of whom were women – engaged with community

leaders and families to support pregnant women to deliver their babies in health facilities. Traditional birth attendants were trained to provide health education and accompany women to the health facility. As a result, skilled birth attendance increased from 12 per cent in 2018, to 83 per cent in 2023.

Efforts to promote girls’ access to education continued in many operations. In **Tajikistan**, UNHCR supported the primary and secondary school enrolment of 1,212 children of forcibly displaced households, of which 870 were girls (71 per cent). In **Zambia**, to promote girls’ access to tertiary education, UNHCR supported 254 refugees through the [DAFI initiative and scholarships](#), with females accounting for 45 per cent of supported students. In **Colombia**, up to 80 per cent of DAFI scholars were Venezuelan refugee women. In **South Sudan**, the South Sudan Host and Refugees Youth Network implemented education activities, including a campaign on female child education and a conference on advocacy for tertiary education, reaching 1,586 youth and their parents. UNHCR and a team from the Ministry of Education participated in a radio talk show, advocating for the value of girls’ education. The [Girls Education Campaign](#) boosted enrolment and education of 1,000 girls to two secondary schools and 16 primary schools. In **Mauritania**, the literacy programme for young people and adults reached 814 learners, including 642 women.

The fact sheet, [Afghanistan Crisis Update: Women and Girls in Displacement](#) (issued in cooperation with UN-Women) highlighted the gender perspective of how displacement disproportionately affected girls’ education and women’s access to food, health care and livelihood in Afghanistan.



Daruka, Akoh, Achot and Martha are vegetable vendors who buy their produce from Charo farm where both Kenyans and refugees farm. They then sell these vegetables to both Kenyans and refugees, making money to support their families in different ways and children with education materials.
© UNHCR/Charity Nzomo Or



Spotlight: Children

Overview

Over 47 million children were forcibly displaced in 2023, mostly by armed conflict.²⁵ However, due to a significant funding gap – with less than one-quarter of the required funding for UNHCR child protection activities available – only 7 million children were able to access protection services from UNHCR and its partners in 163 reporting countries. This represents a decline from 2022, when 8.4 million children accessed these services across 154 countries.

UNHCR operations reported various child protection risks and violations, including child trafficking, child labour (including in its worst forms), child marriage, sexual violence, physical violence, child abuse, child neglect, psychological distress, immigration detention, and recruitment by armed forces and groups. To respond to these challenges, 76 per cent of 126 UNHCR country operations provided child protection services to displaced and stateless children, focusing on protecting children from violence, exploitation, abuse and separation.

Beyond child protection services, UNHCR interventions also aimed to meet children's basic needs and uphold their rights, including access to food, health and education. Specifically, acute malnutrition was treated for 191,000 children, while 95,000 children were admitted for treatment of severe acute malnutrition.²⁶ Households with children were generally prioritized for livelihood support. Of the UNHCR-supported livelihood-intervention beneficiaries, 73 per cent were members of households with at least one child aged 14 years or younger (up from 71 per cent in 2022).²⁷ School attendance increased for both refugee girls and boys at the primary and secondary levels. For refugee girls, attendance rose from 61 per cent in 2022 to 63 per cent in 2023 at the primary level, and from 35 per cent to 38 per cent at the secondary level. For refugee boys, attendance went up from 63 per cent to 66 per cent in primary school, and from 36 per cent to 41 per cent in secondary school. Nearly 6,000 children with disabilities received community-based support and financial assistance to access education in 10 countries.²⁸

Field practices

With violence and armed conflicts often resulting in family loss or involuntary separation, the support to UASC remained part of UNHCR's broader child protection response services. In the **United States of America**, UNHCR supported the efforts of authorities to facilitate family reunification for certain UASC, with a focus on children separated from family across borders. UNHCR also sought to mitigate the risk of family separation through increased access to case management and legal services for children.

Eighteen out of 25 countries reported that they either maintained or increased the proportion of UASC placed in alternative care arrangements, including family-based care. In **Uganda** 3,094 UASC (1,490 girls and 1,604 boys) were supported through best-interest procedures and placed in appropriate alternative care arrangements. **Egypt**, **South Sudan** and **Mauritania** have made substantial improvements in placing UASC in alternative care, with an increase in the proportion across all three operations. In **Niger**, about 80 per cent of the identified UASC were placed in alternative care, including with foster families.



Mexico. Refugee children paint during a workshop
© UNHCR/Ivan Stephens

²⁵ [Refugee Data Finder \(UNHCR\)](#)

²⁶ [Annual Public Health Global Review 2023 \(UNHCR\)](#)

²⁷ [Livelihoods Information System \(UNHCR\)](#)

²⁸ [UNHCR Education Report 2023 – Unlocking Potential: The Right to Education and Opportunity \(UNHCR\)](#)

Forty UNHCR operations strengthened national child protection systems and child-friendly procedures through advocacy for legal and policy reform, enhancement of national child protection systems, integration of refugee children into national plans and provision of technical support on child-friendly procedures. In **Türkiye**, through its support to the Ministry of Family and Social Services, UNHCR helped a monthly average of 800 forcibly displaced children under the national state child protection system, including those in foster care. This enabled children to receive social services, care and psychosocial support.

Life skills, resilience and empowerment initiatives for children were provided in 35 countries. Children were engaged through participation in child-led groups. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, 162 groups of children participated in “Adolescent Empowerment and Life Skills” and 53 in “Supporting Children Rights through Education, the Art and the Media” run by UNHCR and partners. UNHCR and partners also conducted information sessions on children’s rights, violence against children, risks of children withdrawing from school early, child neglect and mine-risk education, reaching 148,010 children (83,515 girls and 64,495 boys) and 47,051 caregivers (44,859 females and 2,192 males). To enhance community engagement and ownership of child protection, UNHCR established and supported 212 child-friendly spaces, children’s clubs and child-welfare committees.

Child-friendly spaces were created in communities and educational institutions in **Colombia**. By enhancing the knowledge of 455 child protection actors in public institutions, schools, communities and civil society organizations, information and guidance were provided to 16,434 children to help mitigate the risk of child recruitment into armed groups. In the **Plurinational State of Bolivia**, UNHCR and partners’ mobile classroom included 1,580 children in activities, such as computing, digital literacy, and non-formal educational and recreational activities.

Efforts emerged to include children’s voices in global and national forums, and in decision-making. In **Rwanda**, seven refugee children took part in the national children’s summit where they met children’s representatives from across sectors and districts of Rwanda. During the summit, they discussed children’s rights and requested to be included in different national systems. In **Ghana**, as part of the commemoration of the International Day of the African Child, two refugee girls participated in a media takeover event, where they hosted television shows.

Twenty-six operations supported families to improve their level of care for children. To protect children and adolescents from exploitative forms of labour when trying to meet basic needs, several operations directly supported families with cash assistance.²⁹ In **Egypt**, 3,132 UASC and their caregivers received monthly cash assistance from UNHCR following best-interest assessments. Individual cash assistance was provided to children and their caregivers in the **Islamic Republic of Iran, Tunisia, Pakistan, Sudan, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Mauritania, South Africa, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Niger** and **Chad**.

UNHCR community-based approach to child protection encouraged children, families and communities to actively participate in protecting children. Community-based cross-sectoral and child protection mechanisms facilitated children’s access to services and the identification and referral of children at risk. Community-based child protection approaches were improved or maintained in 57 per cent of country operations. In **Sudan**, as part of the emergency response, UNHCR and partners established new CBP networks, training members on roles and responsibilities and identifying child protection concerns. This promoted community empowerment, strengthened community networks to address children’s needs, and resulted in the identification of 7,257 UASC who were then provided with alternative care arrangements. In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, 49 community-based child protection structures operated in two refugee sites, including child protection and foster parents’ committees. In **Lebanon**, 104 specialized child protection outreach volunteers provided structured play, liaised with social workers, and monitored UASC, children with disabilities and children living on the streets. In **Yemen**, UNHCR mobile teams identified 3,282 at-risk children. They referred 2,380 children to specialized services and provided recreational activities for 9,235 internally displaced children across 15 governorates in the north and seven governorates in the south, reaching communities in remote rural areas. In **Niger**, 42 child-friendly spaces were established, reaching 52,775 children with psychosocial-support activities. In **India**, increased collaboration with the public health department strengthened the accredited social health activist workers (community health workers employed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) to reach out to refugee communities. This resulted in the inclusion of refugee children in government-immunization schemes, vaccinating almost 1,700 children.

²⁹ [Guidance on Promoting Child Protection Outcomes through Cash-Based Interventions: Full Guidance \(UNHCR\)](#)

▶ Gender-based violence prevention and response services (Action 6e)

Women and girls have access to comprehensive Gender-Based Violence prevention and response services.

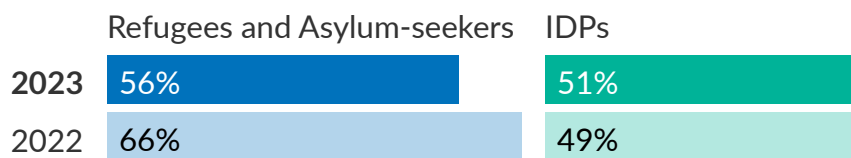
Core Action 6E

“At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adopt and implement SGBV [sexual and gender-based violence] standard operating procedures, operationalizing the four main referral pathways for all survivors (safety/security, legal, medical, and psychosocial), and will promote the same with partners, including Governments.”

UNHCR operations prioritized GBV life-saving activities and sustained GBV prevention and response programming at the same level as in 2022 (\$146 million, spent against a budget of \$366 million). Sixty-two per cent of multi-country operations implementing GBV prevention and response selected the GBV Outcome Area as part of their operational strategies. In 72 per cent of the 122 reporting countries, GBV services were

available to forcibly displaced and stateless persons, including safety, health, legal and psychosocial services. However, it was also reported that, among refugees and asylum-seekers, awareness of GBV services decreased from 66 per cent to 56 per cent, especially in the **Islamic Republic of Iran, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan** and the **Central African Republic**.

Figure 6. Core indicator 4: Proportion of people who know where to access available Gender-Based Violence services



Source: [Gender-Based Violence \(UNHCR\)](#)

Using the [UNHCR GBV Safety Audit Toolkit](#), safety audits were conducted in **Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Türkiye, Italy, Ukraine, Iraq, the Republic of Moldova, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Pakistan** and the north-west region of the **Syrian Arab Republic**. Eighteen GBV specialists were deployed to establish quality prevention and response services for survivors in UNHCR-declared emergencies. UNHCR led

inter-agency GBV coordination efforts in 45 refugee and mixed settings and contributed to the revision of the [Inter-agency GBV Standard Operating Procedures Resource Package](#), which was issued in 2023 in English, French and Spanish. All UNHCR refugee response plans highlighted GBV risks and the accompanying financial needs to support securing critical funding for GBV interventions.

UNHCR practices on access to comprehensive services addressing Gender-Based Violence – selected examples

UNHCR continued to collaborate with various stakeholders including authorities, United Nations agencies, NGOs and forcibly displaced persons towards response to and prevention of GBV.

GBV prevention activities centred on shifting social norms and addressing harmful practices through women and girls empowerment and men and boys engagement

UNHCR engaged in global specialized partnerships and initiatives to address harmful social norms and prevent GBV against forcibly displaced women and girls. This was the case with:

- the [SASA! approach](#) used in [Bangladesh](#), [South Sudan](#) and [Uganda](#);
- the [Girl Shine](#) model in [Bangladesh](#), [Cameroon](#), [Kenya](#), [Uganda](#), the [United Republic of Tanzania](#), [Zimbabwe](#), [Libya](#) and the [Syrian Arab Republic](#);
- the [Engaging Men through Accountable Practice](#) approach in [Indonesia](#), [Iraq](#), [Malaysia](#), [Nigeria](#), [South Sudan](#), [Pakistan](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Zimbabwe](#), the [United Republic of Tanzania](#), the [Syrian Arab Republic](#) and [Thailand](#);
- a separate male role model programme in [Bangladesh](#).

In [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), UNHCR partner [Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative](#) provided internally displaced and asylum-seeking women with information sessions on education, trafficking, GBV, drug abuse, other forms of violence and existing response mechanisms in line with the national [Gender Equality Law](#). In [India](#), almost 9,300 women and girls were engaged in the prevention of harmful GBV traditional practices through GBV awareness sessions, and more than 6,300 men and boys were involved as agents of change in their communities. In [Rwandan](#) refugee camps, to support child mothers, partners constructed a girls' safe space, renovated an existing safe space and constructed a daycare where teen mothers can leave their children and go to school.

Most operations reported intimate-partner violence as the most prevalent form of GBV. GBV response services included medical and psychological support, safe shelter, case management, legal support, cash and material assistance, empowerment, relocation and

livelihoods support. In the [Central African Republic](#), in response to the influx of Sudanese refugees, the majority of whom were women and children, UNHCR and partners established [Ma Mbi Si](#)³⁰ centres, which provided initial care and psychosocial support to Gender-Based Violence survivors.

In [Mali](#), UNHCR supported female genital-mutilation survivors to receive reconstructive surgery through specialized health partners. In the [United Republic of Tanzania](#), UNHCR implemented a forensic project with state, NGO and United Nations partners³¹ to enhance forensic-evidence chain management, improving access to justice for survivors of Gender-Based Violence. In [Guatemala](#), to promote access to comprehensive GBV prevention and response services, UNHCR supported seven mobile units (UNIVETS) of the Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking. UNIVETS reached some 69,000 people in 62 remote municipalities with GBV awareness and individual case management and referral. UNHCR supported the operation of the UNIVETS by providing the mobile units with staff, equipment, capacity support and communication materials.

UNHCR country offices in the [Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela](#), [Libya](#), [Israel](#), [Spain](#) and [Greece](#) provided GBV response services to victims of trafficking. In [Europe](#), the [UNHCR Stay Safe campaign](#) across 18 countries, reached 7.9 million people through Facebook and Instagram advertisements, with the aim to safeguard Ukrainian refugees from risks linked to trafficking, exploitation and abuse associated with employment and assistance offers received online.

UNHCR implemented child marriage prevention and response initiatives in [India](#), [Nepal](#), [Indonesia](#), [Malaysia](#), the [Republic of Moldova](#), [Bangladesh](#), [El Salvador](#), [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Mauritania](#), [Cameroon](#) and [Egypt](#). Early marriage as a form of GBV emerged as a significant protection risk in several emergency and protracted displacement situations, often as a form of harmful coping strategy or seen as an acceptable cultural and social behaviour. For instance, early marriage accounted for 90 per cent of all GBV cases in [Mauritania](#) and 42 per cent of all GBV cases in [Niger](#). UNHCR engaged with authorities and communities to raise awareness on the negative effects of child marriage on girls and advocated for prioritized assistance, including food and cash assistance, to profiles of households at risk. In [Jordan](#), UNHCR engaged with the Supreme Sharia Court on child marriage, to raise awareness among families considering marriage for their daughters under the age of 18.

³⁰ "Ma Mbi Si" means "listen to me too" in Sango; this name was chosen by forcibly displaced Central African women.

³¹ These included the Danish Refugee Council, Medical Teams International, the Turkish Red Crescent Society, Doctors without Borders, the Ministry of Home Affairs Tanzania, the Forensic Bureau of Tanzania, the Chief Government Chemist Laboratory Agency, the Analytical Laboratory and the United Nations Population Fund.



II. Organizational Accountability

Switzerland. Opening plenary session of the Global Refugee Forum 2023. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, speaks at the opening plenary of the Global Refugee Forum 2023. @ UNHCR

▶ II.i Diversity, equity and inclusion

UNHCR further developed its diversity, equity and inclusion strategic framework. The framework aims to foster inclusion, promote belonging and enhance the effectiveness of the organization in fulfilling its protection mandate through an inclusive workforce. Extensive consultations were conducted with internal stakeholders, including the Inclusion and Diversity Advisory Group established in June 2023. In alignment with this framework, UNHCR continued to implement the three diversity, equity and inclusion action plans on gender parity and race equality, and the five-year action plan for disability inclusion.

Progress on gender parity

The Gender Action Plan supports UNHCR to achieve gender parity across all levels and contractual arrangements by 2026, with a particular focus on the senior international workforce. In 2023, UNHCR continued to make progress in closing gender gaps. Figure 8 illustrates that, by the end of 2023, UNHCR made progress towards parity for female employees at the P2 to D1 levels, reflecting an improved

inclusion of women at each of those grades over the year. At the P5 level, the gender distribution was 49 per cent female and 51 per cent male, while at the D1 level, it was 45 per cent female and 55 per cent male. The D2 grade was the only level with a slight reduction in female representation, dropping from 42 per cent in 2022 to 41 per cent in 2023. UNHCR introduced a new parental-leave policy as part of its commitment to be a more inclusive organization. This policy features more inclusive definitions of parenthood and offers expanded leave entitlements following the birth or adoption of a child, including through surrogacy.

Progress on LGBTIQ+ inclusion

Over the past year, UNHCR has made significant strides in supporting its LGBTIQ+ colleagues and reaffirming its commitment to zero tolerance for discrimination based on SOGIESC. UNHCR appointed three UN-GLOBE representatives who actively advocate for the safety and security of all colleagues, aligning the entity's efforts with broader initiatives to address workforce biases and to ensure inclusivity.

Figure 7. Distribution of women and men by grade, December 2023

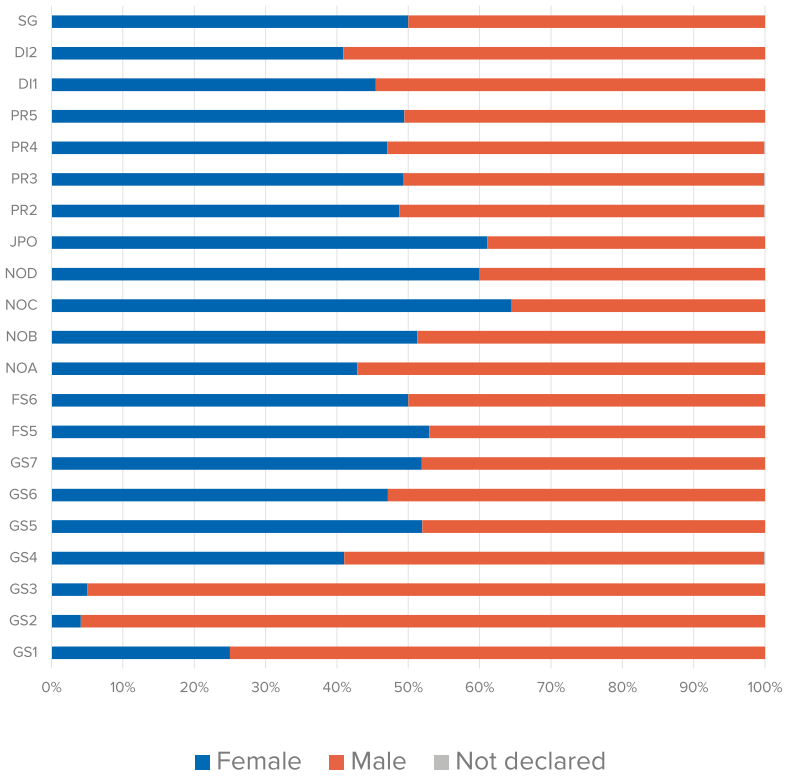
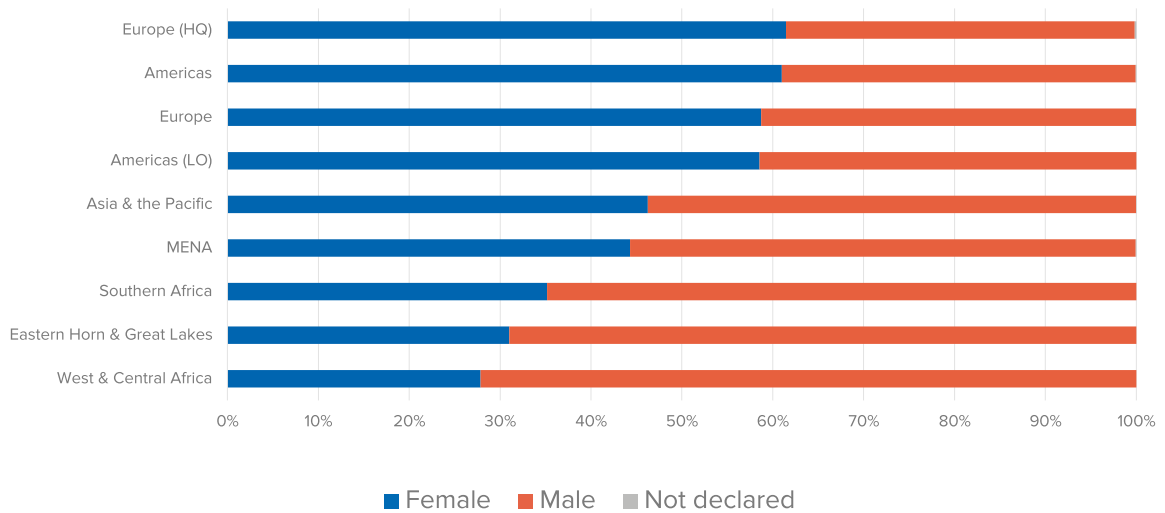


Figure 8. Gender breakdown by region (31 December 2023) – GS1 to SG



Progress on race equality

UNHCR continued its partnership with [McKinsey & Company](#) through the Executive Leadership Program, which brought together 152 UNHCR staff of African, Asian and Hispanic descent, facilitating a rich exchange of perspectives. UNHCR launched the “Let’s Talk About Race” podcast to highlight personal experiences and enhance mutual understanding among colleagues. In October 2023, UNHCR joined 22 organizations to launch the [Geneva Alliance Against Racism](#). This alliance aims to share field practices and coordinate efforts to combat racial discrimination, supporting the [United Nations Secretary General’s Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for all in the United Nations](#).

Progress on disability inclusion

UNHCR made progress in physical and digital accessibility, demonstrating commitment to foster an inclusive environment for all. Through coordination with divisions and support across sections, UNHCR set a precedent as the first United Nations agency to incorporate standard-assignment-length extensions for colleagues with disabilities. Twenty-five per cent of UNHCR premises have been upgraded to meet physical accessibility standards. UNHCR is enhancing digital accessibility in its human resources system, Workday, to support diverse users to navigate the platform with ease. UNHCR established a working group with other United Nations agencies to raise awareness, combat stigma and promote healthy management practices in working with disabilities across organizations.

► II.ii Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

In 2018, UNHCR consolidated its efforts to combat [Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(SEA\) and sexual harassment](#) by establishing a dedicated capacity in the Office of the Principal Adviser on PSEA and Sexual Harassment. Progress was made to strengthen efforts to prevent, mitigate the risks of and respond to sexual misconduct, culminating in an updated UNHCR [2023–2025 Strategy and Action Plan for Tackling Sexual Misconduct](#).

The strategy strengthens operational capacity to tackle sexual misconduct with an integrated approach, inter-agency engagement and operationalization of [UNHCR’s Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach](#) to ensure adequate victim support. The victim care officer role, initially for tracking Victim-Centred Approach policy implementation and supporting victims of sexual harassment only, expanded in 2023 to also cover SEA cases, with the addition of a dedicated SEA victim care officer.

Partner PSEA capacity strengthening continued in 2023 with 89 per cent of partner NGOs assessed in their PSEA capacity (80 per cent in 2022), and 56 per cent of NGOs achieving full PSEA capacity. PSEA capacity strengthening includes:

- mandatory PSEA training of all staff;
- a clear PSEA policy;
- reference checks and screening of personnel for sexual misconduct allegations;
- reporting and feedback mechanisms;
- assistance and referrals;
- investigations capacity;
- disciplinary procedures;
- standard clauses requiring sub-contractors to abide by PSEA measures.

Partner PSEA capacity-building ensures that measures are in place to receive reports and respond to SEA allegations. Community awareness is crucial to educate forcibly displaced and stateless persons on SEA and how to report it. SEA information sessions or training by UNHCR and partners were delivered to over 504,000 forcibly displaced and stateless persons in 58 countries. To highlight best practices, the Regional Bureau for Europe published the UNHCR case study [10 Promising Practices from the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) in Europe](#).

The [Interagency PSEA Community Outreach and Communications Fund](#) was established as a joint initiative of UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies under the 2020 [High Commissioner’s IASC Championship on Protection from SEA and Sexual Harassment](#), and funded seven NGOs working on PSEA. Managed by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the fund invests in community-led efforts to ensure that communities and survivors of SEA know how and where to safely report SEA allegations. Since its inception, the fund received over 5,000 applications from over 100 countries. Many applications specifically address SEA risks and challenges exacerbated by conflict, health crises and climate change, while also targeting groups at heightened risk of SEA, such as women and girls with disabilities, geographically isolated communities, and individuals with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. The fund is a key inter-agency initiative backing the localization agenda, funding 56 projects in 39 countries (with seven projects funded in 2023), and reaching over 2 million people with PSEA awareness. An external review of the fund’s work in 2023 found that 87 per cent of projects resulted in increased PSEA awareness and an 85 per cent increase in reporting following awareness campaigns. In addition, 86 per cent of funded organizations reported that their PSEA capacity was strengthened.

An important pillar of UNHCR’s work on PSEA is in its inter-agency engagement. In 2022, the IASC commenced the revision of the inter-agency community-based complaints mechanism, with the overall goal of providing functioning and well-resourced inter-agency mechanisms for reporting SEA complaints, referrals and assistance in all humanitarian contexts by 2026. UNHCR contributed to the development and issuance of the [IASC Guidance note on Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures](#) published in September 2023 and will co-lead the workstream together with the International

Organization for Migration in 2024 under the IASC Technical Advisory Group on PSEAH. The updated SEA complaint referral and assistance approach adopts a holistic model encompassing complaint intake, inter-agency SEA referrals and victim assistance. This involves close coordination with actors for AAP to ensure safe and accessible FRMs for community members to report SEA complaints.

► Evaluation of age, gender and diversity policy in UNHCR work

Between 2019 and 2023, UNHCR commissioned an external independent longitudinal evaluation of its 2018 AGD Policy. The evaluation was built on a global analysis and on interviews in select operations (**Chad, Greece, Kenya, Mexico** and **Thailand**) through mixed methods, including field visits, remote consultations, key informant interviews and FGDs. The evaluation explored the level of understanding and implementation of the AGD policy; the systematic collection and use of AGD data, support systems and processes to enhance AGD policy implementation; dialogue on AGD with governments, NGOs and United Nations partners; and lessons learned from the implementation of the AGD policy.

The [final AGD evaluation report](#) was issued in December 2023. Based on the evaluation team’s findings and following a co-creation workshop with UNHCR staff from various divisions, entities and regional bureaux held in August 2023, seven overarching recommendations on the AGD policy were proposed:

1. Strengthen commitment and action from leadership and management at all levels around the AGD policy and AGD as a corporate approach that reaches beyond the protection unit.

2. Reinforce and adapt existing systems to strengthen AGD-informed programming.
3. Strengthen monitoring, reporting and evaluation to better understand UNHCR’s progress and achievements in AGD, as well as its strengths and weaknesses.
4. Continue to invest in improving and innovating mechanisms for AAP.
5. Apply an intersectional lens in the disaggregated analysis and use of data and evidence to promote strategic, evidence-informed programme design, implementation and advocacy.
6. Ensure a more effective and coherent response to the needs of the people with and for whom UNHCR works, by continuing to invest in and strengthen partnerships around AGD policy commitments with external actors at national, regional and global levels.
7. Build on lessons learned, and on the results of the implementation of these recommendations, to inform future revisions of an adequately resourced AGD policy.

The Division of International Protection is coordinating the response to the recommendations of the evaluation team, some of which are included in the “Ways forward” section.

▶ II.iii United Nations System-Wide Frameworks

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The [UN-SWAP on Gender equality and women's Empowerment](#) serves as an accountability framework to track, monitor and measure the incorporation of gender equality and women's empowerment across United Nations agencies. UN-SWAP 2.0 (2018–2024) strengthened existing indicators and anchored the framework within the “2030 Agenda for sustainable development” towards achieving [SDG 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#). The UN-SWAP 2.0 self-assessment requires a comprehensive organizational approach to evaluate each United Nations agency's progress on 17 performance indicators, related to gender SDG results and institutional strengthening. It covers six broad areas:

1. results-based management;
2. oversight;
3. accountability;
4. human and financial resources;
5. capacity;
6. knowledge, communication and coherence.

Results for 2023 showed that UNHCR met 12 requirements and exceeded in three requirements bringing compliance to 15 of the 17 applicable performance indicators (compared to 14 in 2022). The UN-SWAP 2.0 assessment highlighted areas for improvement by UNHCR in evaluation and financial-resource tracking and allocation. To address these, UNHCR's Evaluation Office is conducting an evaluation of UNHCR's approach to GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response. UNHCR is working internally through its Division of Financial and Administrative Management to implement the United Nations [Gender Equality Marker](#). This financial-resource tracking mechanism for gender equality and women's empowerment is aligned with the United Nations data standards for system-wide reporting of financial data and is set to be implemented before January 2026.

United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

[UNDIS](#) establishes a vision and commitment for the entire United Nations system on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Progress on the strategy is measured through an accountability framework with benchmarks applied by each United Nations agency to assess the level of disability inclusion across policies and actions. UNHCR has been reporting its progress annually since 2019, measuring four core areas: inclusiveness, programming, organizational culture, and leadership, strategic planning

and management. UNHCR reported similar progress to the previous year, except in its evaluation system and approach. An assessment of the 18 evaluation reports produced throughout the year showed that eight evaluations were not in line with anticipated requirements on disability inclusion. In operations, financial constraints in 2023 led several operations to deprioritize identification and support to persons with disabilities. Several milestones were reached on disability in the areas of inclusive consultation, accessibility, and coordination on organizational culture. UNHCR also made strides in both physical and digital accessibility through efforts across various divisions.

United Nations Youth Strategy

The United Nations [Youth2030](#) strategy directs global United Nations efforts for and with young people. UNHCR has so far participated in the annual reporting exercise that evaluates progress on key performance indicators through a United Nations entity [scorecard](#). In the 2023 Youth2030 reporting cycle covering progress made during the year, UNHCR maintained the same overall score as in 2022 and was rated as a progressive agency with positive performance. UNHCR maintained its progress in youth-leadership promotion, innovation, communication, advocacy and youth engagement policies. In addition, several examples of UNHCR activities were cited in the overall [report](#) developed by the [Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth](#).

2023 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network assessment

In 2023, UNHCR underwent its fourth [MOPAN assessment](#), covering the period from January 2018 to August 2023. Some aspects of the overall MOPAN evaluation referred to AGD elements and revealed both areas of noteworthy progress and areas in which UNHCR still needs to improve its performance. The MOPAN report provided evidence that UNHCR's performance in delivering gender outcomes has improved significantly and was considered satisfactory. The report recognized that UNHCR has an AGD policy, that data gathering and reporting are disaggregated, and that COMPASS includes AGD indicators at impact, outcome and output levels. It also noted that the new organizational gender equality marker enables UNHCR to track outputs contributing to gender equality and that more resources are allocated to gender issues. However, the MOPAN evaluation suggested that the quality and quantity of gender-disaggregated data are still a work in progress; that staff awareness of the AGD policy – although improving – requires further enhancement; and that gender should be more deeply integrated into UNHCR's evaluations.



Spotlight: Youth

Overview

Youth (15–24 years)³² are estimated to make up about 20 per cent of displaced people. UNHCR recognizes that in displacement situations, youth are at risk of being neglected and exposed to other risks such as forced recruitment, exploitation, disrupted education, violence and detention. [Evidence](#) shows that lack of alternatives and opportunities, including in host countries, result in children and youth undertaking perilous onward movements, often in the hands of smugglers and traffickers. Conversely, UNHCR recognizes that youth also have talent and potential, and that they seek opportunities to participate meaningfully by becoming agents of change in their communities and influencing the programmes that impact their lives.

In 2023, to confirm its commitment to youth engagement and its cross-cutting approach to youth, UNHCR published the [Youth Report 2020–2022: Working with and for Youth in Situations of Forced Displacement](#). The report underlines how UNHCR continued to operationalize the seven [Core Actions for Refugee Youth](#), which were re-validated at the end of 2023 by the outgoing members of the UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) through a series of community consultations. In line with the recommendations from the core actions, a

skills-transfer initiative was rolled out and intended to benefit the outgoing GYAC members, in partnership with the [GRYN](#), a civil society organization formed by refugee youth and previous GYAC members. The skills-transfer sessions were delivered by youth activists “from youth to youth” and provided outgoing GYAC members with skills and confidence in leadership, advocacy and communication abilities to support their future roles as youth leaders in their respective communities.

Youth engagement and inclusion were promoted at global levels with initiatives such as the [Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action](#). UNHCR ensured the participation of youth in the GRF through the presence of members of various youth networks, including the GYAC, the DAFI Students’ Network, the [Tertiary Refugee Student Network](#), the Young Champions Network and the GRYN.

UNHCR partnered with UNIQLO, the worldwide clothing brand, for the third edition of the [Youth with Refugee Art Contest](#), which attracted 4,000 young refugee and host community participants on World Youth Day. The winning [graphic t-shirts](#) raised funds for refugees, with an initial \$100,000 donation secured for UNHCR.

Field practices

Through global initiatives, UNHCR supported youth engagement through small-project funding in [Malaysia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Brazil, El Salvador](#) and the [Dominican Republic](#). The projects covered youth involvement in decision-making, sexual and reproductive health awareness, environmental awareness, statelessness, sports, mental health and peer tutoring.

UNHCR supported grass-roots refugee youth organizations with capacity-building and funding in [El Salvador, Ethiopia, the Dominican Republic, Kenya, India, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, South Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda](#) and [Yemen](#). Initiatives were aimed at bolstering advocacy, peacebuilding, and social and recreational activities led by refugee youth.

Regional youth-support programmes were rolled out in the African Great Lakes and the Americas. Through the [Regional Youth Peacebuilding Programme](#) implemented in [Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan](#) and [Ethiopia](#), UNHCR empowered 498 refugee and

host community youth with skills, resources and platforms to actively engage in conflict resolution, dialogue and community-building activities. Technical and Vocational Education and Training courses were delivered to 314 youth who gained skills in tailoring, catering, driving, computer literacy, shoe-making, hairdressing, welding, electricity and auto mechanics. This resulted in paid employment opportunities in their respective host countries. In [South Sudan](#) and [Uganda](#), refugee and host community youth participated in cash-for-work initiatives through construction projects in refugee-hosting settlements. Some youth received start-up cash grants to establish their enterprises, including poultry and goat farming.

In the Americas, UNHCR supported the creation of the Youth Mobility Network. The network was made up of forcibly displaced and stateless youth from nine countries, and the [Red Regional de Juventud en movilidad \(REJUMOVI\)](#), comprising ten countries. Projects for Indigenous youth were implemented to

³² For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines “youth” as people aged between 15 and 24 years, although UNHCR understands that the meaning of the term varies in different societies around the world, and flexibility is required to accommodate national and regional youth policies and directives, as well as different contextual realities. For more information, see the UNHCR tipsheet “Applying the UNHCR age, gender and diversity policy to youth”, April 2021. [Available from here.](#)

support communication and advocacy in challenging contexts, to empower communities, and to establish dedicated national spaces for ongoing youth initiatives. UNHCR provided advocacy workshops for 47 youth activists in the **Dominican Republic**. A national [media campaign](#) and panel discussion, “*Diálogo de Tambores*”, addressed the impact of statelessness on refugee youth from Haiti.

UNHCR **Zimbabwe** provided support to a refugee youth-led organization in the Tongogara Refugee Camp, the [Refugee Coalition for Climate Action](#), dedicated to creating awareness about climate change and environmental degradation by coordinating refugee and host community youth to take the lead in climate and environmental action. Environmental awareness through media and information literacy was improved, and a clean environment was promoted through clean-up campaigns and tree planting.

Several initiatives were launched to support youth affected by violence and conflict. As part of the Regional Youth Peacebuilding Programme, youth peacebuilders in **Uganda’s** Adjumani, Moyo and Arua districts were actively engaged in conflict-mapping and providing insights on the dynamics of conflicts in various regions. In **Sudan**, 150 mentors reached 2,535 youth. In settlements and sites hosting refugees in the White Nile State, youth were engaged in night patrols to enhance security, resulting in a significant decrease in incidents by the end of 2023, confirming the impact of community-watch groups in collaboration with security stakeholders to minimize risks.

UNHCR **El Salvador** supported a national strategy for the prevention of violence and forced displacement through urban centres of well-being and opportunities ([CUBO](#)). This is a government initiative managed by youth committees that creates a safe place for recreational activities, capacity-building and integration within communities, and has been implemented in areas with high rates of gang violence. UNHCR supported the initiative by providing equipment and books, and by sponsoring arts, recreational, educational, digital, cultural and sports activities.

Sports activities often guided interventions to engage and empower youth. UNHCR **Guatemala** supported the community group, Youth for Change (*Jovenes por el Cambio*), using boxing as a mechanism to build the self-confidence of girls.



Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Fernanda from the San Miguel community centre boxing club using sports as a girl and women empowerment and violence prevention tool. © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

UNHCR **Mexico** implemented the UNHCR [Sports for Protection](#) approach, engaging 8,351 youth in sports activities.

In **Algeria**, the Saharawi Department of Youth and Sports organized various sports activities to mitigate emerging risks among youth, such as increased incidents of drug trafficking and theft. Activities included school sports for 267 students (49 per cent female), recreational activities for 400 youth, and girls’ volleyball competitions between five camps.

Creating employment opportunities by teaching youth new skills offers a path to durable solutions. In **Azerbaijan**, 30 youth were involved in apprenticeships and several business plans were supported. Community volunteers established a Youth Community Club consisting of DAFI students and alumni, with regular meetings at the Refugee Clinic in Baku. Community volunteers organized embroidery; art; English, Azerbaijani and Russian conversation clubs; and graphic design and 3D-modelling courses. In **Niger**, 683 young learners benefited from vocational training in various trades before receiving start-up kits to enhance their skills and improve their income.

Age, Gender and Diversity considerations in refugee status determination procedures

All individuals – regardless of age, gender or other diverse characteristics – should have the opportunity to present their refugee claims on an equal basis with others. UNHCR includes and promotes AGD considerations throughout the RSD process to ensure individuals receive necessary assistance and support in presenting their refugee claims. This includes implementing measures for early identification of individuals who require adapted procedures with information provided in clear and accessible formats. AGD considerations may also play a role in determining refugee status in situations where a particular characteristic or condition (such as sexual orientation and gender identity, mental health conditions, psychosocial or intellectual disabilities, or other characteristics) could lead to persecution. UNHCR seeks to further embed an AGD- inclusive approach in RSD processes, affirming the principle that all individuals should have the right to seek and enjoy asylum without discrimination.

The [Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate](#) stipulates that all aspects of the RSD procedures must adhere to established UNHCR policies, including AGD considerations.

Guidance is also in place to adapt procedures to individuals with specific needs, including child-friendly approaches and special considerations for [applicants with mental-health conditions and psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities](#). Individuals may be accompanied during the interviews and appointments by a trusted support person, such as a family member or a professional. Access to legal assistance and

representation in the RSD process is another important safeguard.

Age, Gender and Diversity in asylum procedures

UNHCR provides expert opinions and guidance on the AGD elements of RSD procedures, including the application of AGD-sensitive procedures during interviews.

To help process asylum claims, UNHCR issues country guidance to inform the decision-making process. The guidance provides an overview of people with international protection needs including people with specific profiles where relevant, such as children, youth, women and SOGIESC profiles. In 2023, guidance was issued on [Nicaragua](#), [Afghanistan](#) and [Colombia](#). Through its judicial engagement, UNHCR has also provided guidance to decision makers on the assessment of the inclusion criteria under the 1951 Refugee Convention or the broader refugee definitions with regards to AGD considerations. For instance, in 2023, UNHCR issued the [Statement on the Concept of Persecution on Cumulative Grounds in Light of the Current Situation for Women and Girls in Afghanistan](#), and a statement on [Membership of Particular Social Group and the Best Interests of the Child in Asylum Procedures](#).

UNHCR worked closely with the IDA on the intersectionality of refugee protection and asylum, releasing the discussion paper, [Exploring the Intersectionality of International Refugee Protection and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).



Egypt. Vulnerable Sudanese family is registered by UNHCR Cairo. Nour Behairi, UNHCR Registration Assistant, registers a Sudanese family after completing their registration process in Cairo. After fleeing Sudan due to violence, Rania* (35) approached UNHCR. © UNHCR/Jaime Giménez

Field practices

To ensure equal access to asylum, information in the language of origin of diverse asylum-seekers is provided through diverse channels and is tailored to specific profiles of women, children, minority groups and LGBTIQ+ persons. In **Mexico**, the [Confía En El Jaguar](#) project generated content to combat misinformation about the asylum system by engaging a Refugee-Led Organization.

UNHCR delivered trainings to decision makers in national asylum systems to strengthen their capacity in RSD and interviewing people with specific profiles. Jointly with the Council of Europe and the European Union Agency for Asylum, UNHCR trained European Union officials on interviewing and it developed an e-learning course, [LGBTI Persons in the Asylum Procedure](#). An interactive session on reviewing RSD cases of diverse people, including

people with diverse SOGIESC, was facilitated during a regional RSD workshop in the MENA region. In **Ireland**, the induction training for decisions-makers included guidance on gender and claims based on SOGIESC. In **Spain**, UNHCR and [Federación Estatal LGTBI+](#), the Spanish Federation of LGBTIQ+ associations, relaunched a joint training course on asylum. UNHCR **Croatia**, in collaboration with the Croatian Law Centre and the Judicial Academy, organized trainings on GBV in the context of RSD for 10 judges and RSD decision makers from the Ministry of the Interior, facilitated by the translation of the [Guidelines on International Protection No. 1: Gender-Related Persecution](#) into Croatian. In **Denmark**, a training on children in the RSD process was delivered to government officials. Child-friendly interviewing techniques were introduced to government counterparts in **Papua New Guinea** during an asylum- and refugee protection workshop.

Resettlement and complementary pathways

The 2023 revised [UNHCR Resettlement Handbook](#) contains guidance on [AGD considerations in resettlement](#). Detailed guidance on diverse groups includes [women and girls at risk, children and adolescents at risk](#), survivors of violence and/or torture and [medical needs](#). UNHCR continued its efforts to improve gender balance in the context of durable solutions and to identify and support refugee women and girls at heightened risk. Towards longer-term solutions for women, of the 155,486 submissions completed for 24 resettlement countries from 96 UNHCR operations, 51 per cent represented women and girls. Fifteen per cent of the total submission was under the “women and girls at risk” category.



United Kingdom. Welcoming environment helps refugee to train and find work as a nurse. Kismat Ara at work in the Children's Ward at Bradford Royal Infirmary. © UNHCR/ Andrew Testa



III. Ways Forward

Switzerland. Final plenary and closing ceremony on day three of the Global Refugee Forum 2023. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, centre, poses for a group photograph with leaders at the final plenary and Closing Ceremony of the Global Refugee Forum 2023. © UNHCR/ Will Swanson

The [Longitudinal Evaluation of UNHCR's AGD Policy](#) finalized in 2023 has been important in assessing both the aware-ness and implementation of UNHCR's AGD policy, underscoring the need to reinforce leadership commitment to promote AGD and to better integrate AGD dimensions across all aspects of UNHCR's work. Based on the conclusions of the evaluation and the progress detailed in this report, the following recommendations outline potential actions at multiple levels that UNHCR will discuss to further advance the systematic application of its AGD policy in 2024:

1. Socialize and enhance the awareness and uptake of the AGD policy across all levels of the organization, ensuring it is consistently understood, communicated and integrated into all aspects of UNHCR's work. Actions for 2024 may include:
 - a. Organize senior-level briefings for all UNHCR staff to consider areas of progress reflected in this report; re-emphasize the importance of applying an AGD approach systematically across UNHCR's work; recall the core actions of the AGD policy; and disseminate and take action on the findings of the longitudinal evaluation and the planned follow-up.
 - b. Continue capacity-building efforts on AGD for UNHCR staff and partners by promoting the UNHCR AGD e-learning for staff and by integrating AGD components into both protection- and non-protection-related learning materials and initiatives, to ensure a comprehensive understanding and application of the AGD approach across all areas of UNHCR's work.
 - c. Promote good practices in AGD-inclusive programming, participation, AAP and gender equality among all UNHCR staff.

2. Enhance the integration of AGD-disaggregated data into UNHCR's population statistics, assessments and results indicators within COMPASS, to improve analysis, inform programming and decision-making, and enhance external reporting. Actions for 2024 may include:
 - a. Enhance staff capacity to collect, analyse and utilize AGD-disaggregated data, as well as applying organizational markers in COMPASS.
 - b. Introduce tools to improve internal self-assessment of the AGD policy implementation in UNHCR operations.
 - c. Strengthen the organization's capacity to identify and record additional AGD factors that may put individuals at heightened risk.
 - d. Develop systems to integrate diverse data sources reflecting AGD to support inclusive programming.
3. Enhance participation and inclusion, promote innovative ways to support the agency of forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and ensure their meaningful engagement throughout the operation-management cycle. Actions for 2024 may include:
 - a. Enhance digital solutions to improve meaningful participation.
 - b. Sustain investment, both across UNHCR operations and within inter-agency initiatives, by adopting innovative technologies that support effective two-way communication with forcibly displaced and stateless persons, agile contacts and avenues for feedback, and a timely and meaningful response.
 - c. Foster internal collective action and leverage external partnerships, expertise and resources, to enhance the organization's capacity to support and advance the policy objectives.
4. Continue to invest in responding to the multiple protection risks and needs of women and girls and in initiatives that promote gender equality, in line with UNHCR Strategic Directions, other core UNHCR policies and the United Nations system-wide commitments of the newly-endorsed [Gender Equality Acceleration Plan](#).
 - a. Continue to promote gender equality across the organization, including by investing in UNHCR staff capacity and by systematically integrating gender dimensions into programming.
 - b. Continue to invest in the implementation of the UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence and to prioritize resources within UNHCR operations for GBV life-saving activities and sustained GBV prevention and response programming.
 - c. Increase cooperation with and support to women-led organizations, including those led by forcibly displaced persons, directly as well as through thematic funding streams.



Meaningful engagement: Enhancing inclusive participation in UNHCR work

Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report
2023