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**Evaluation**

**Evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis  
response and promoting an integrated resilience approach**

**Executive summary**

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## I. Background

1. Refugee crises globally are not only increasing in scale but are protracted and have significant development consequences. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently more than 79.5 million people displaced worldwide—the highest number on record since statistics on refugees have been collected. As a result of the Syrian conflict, there are 5.6 million refugees in the region, severely impacting by order of the number of refugees being hosted, neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey and to a lesser extent Egypt, Iraq and some European Union countries. Since 2010, at least 15 conflicts have significantly increased the number of refugees. Although not of the same scale as the Syrian crisis, other refugee crises originating in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sudan and Venezuela have slowed both the pace of development and efforts in addressing conflict drivers. In addition to the significant needs of the refugee populations, host countries are facing equally daunting development challenges of their own.

2. UNDP supports a total of about 40 countries that are hosting refugees and/or are countries of origin, with the aim of strengthening government processes and capacities to address the developmental consequences of the influx of refugees on host communities; facilitating the inclusion of refugees in national development planning; and improving conditions for both refugees and host communities. For the Syrian refugee crisis response, UNDP supported national and local governments in host countries, in a diversity of contexts, to address the development impacts of the crisis. With UNHCR, UNDP coordinated the Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP), which provided a framework for the activities of United Nations and other agencies at the regional and country levels, to address humanitarian and development issues simultaneously, using a resilience approach. The 3RP is considered a paradigm shift from predominantly humanitarian response plans.

3. The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office has evaluated UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promotion of an integrated resilience approach. Part of the office's workplan approved by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2018, the evaluation assessed the contribution of UNDP to the Syrian refugee crisis response and the 3RP at the national and regional levels. While the primary focus of the evaluation was the Syrian refugee crisis response, for a broader understanding of UNDP support to refugee response, the evaluation also assessed the UNDP positioning and approaches in its response to other refugee crises. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the UNDP resilience-based development approach contributed to bridging the humanitarian and development divide; and the extent to which resilience-based development approaches have underpinned the Syrian refugee crisis-response framework as well as other UNDP refugee responses and corporate frameworks.

4. The evaluation will contribute to the consolidation of the Syrian refugee crisis response as well as the development of corporate refugee response programming and strategy. The evaluation will strengthen the accountability of UNDP to global, regional and national programme partners and the Executive Board.

5. The evaluation covered Syrian refugee crisis-response programmes in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt for the period 2015-2019. The evaluation assessed the 3RP coordination structure and key streams of the UNDP country-level response (i.e., livelihoods and employment opportunities, service delivery, energy and social cohesion at the country level, strengthening national capacities). The evaluation covered UNDP regional and national contributions to the 3RP in terms of leadership, coordination, partnerships, funding and advocacy, building on four independent country programme evaluations conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office in 2019 in Turkey,

Lebanon, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (hereinafter Syria). The evaluation carried out a case study and field visit for the UNDP Syrian refugee crisis response in Jordan and a desk study of the response in Egypt.

## II. UNDP programme scope and scale

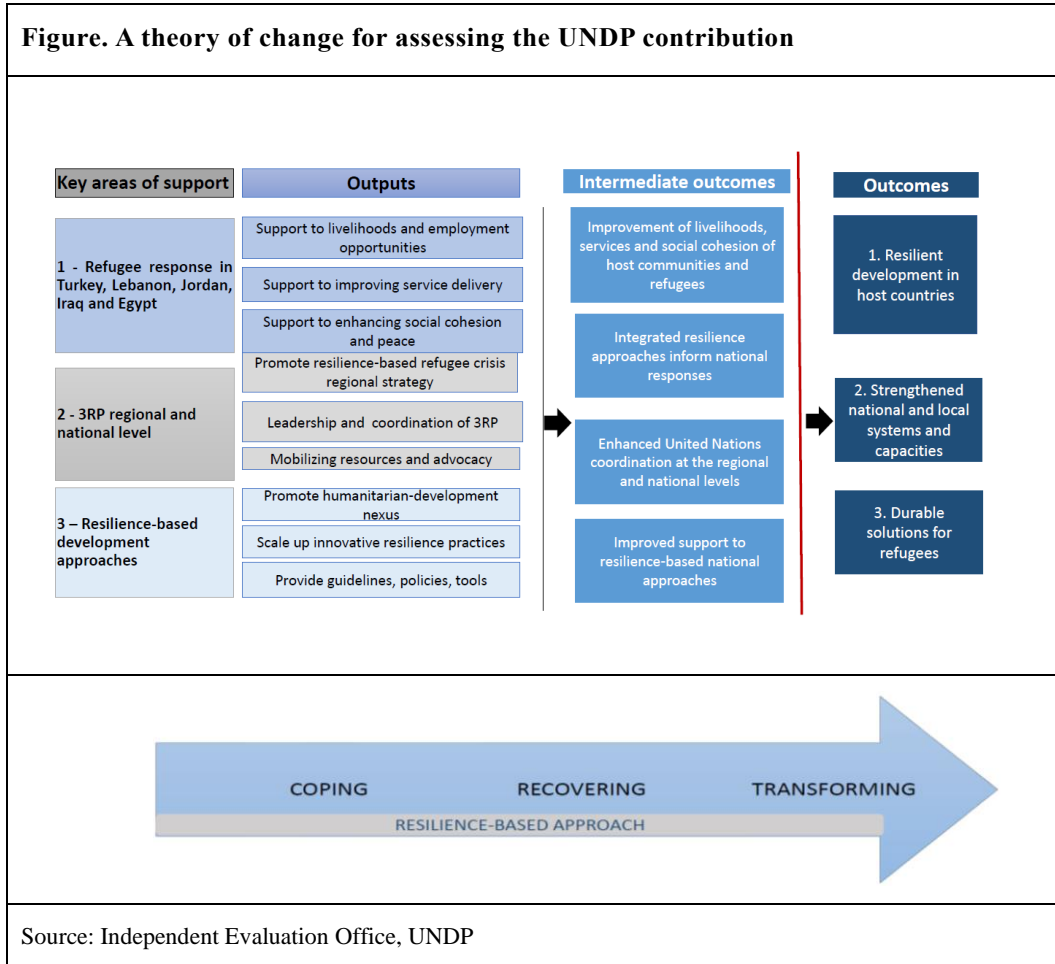
6. UNDP has over the years supported refugee crisis response as part of its development and conflict prevention and response programmes. UNDP programme strategies reinforced the principle that the refugee crisis as a development issue needs more direct engagement to address the development consequences of displacement and durable solutions for the refugees. The UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 explicitly recognized displacement as an emerging issue for which specific signature solutions could be developed in partnership with relevant agencies. The Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 did not explicitly prioritize support to refugee response although broadly considered it as part of conflict-related displacement and response.

7. Globally from 2011 to 2016, UNDP had 125 projects in 39 countries pertaining to refugee-related displacement worth \$1.3 billion. When compared to the UNDP spending on internally displaced persons, the refugee-related response is a smaller component. At the onset of refugee crises, UNDP interventions range from supporting early recovery coordination to comprehensive, resilience-based responses for host communities and refugees. This includes support to core government functions at local and national levels, job creation and livelihoods, enterprise recovery, environmental rehabilitation, social cohesion, conflict prevention, protection and access to rule of law and justice. In the medium and longer terms, UNDP supports initiatives addressing root causes of forced displacement and where applicable, the return and reintegration of displaced persons.

8. Responding to the scale and protracted nature of the Syrian crisis required agencies to rethink their collective development and humanitarian responses and to act beyond their traditional mandates. In this context, the UNDP resilience-based development approach was formulated to support communities and institutions to respond to increased demand and pressure (“coping”), promote household recovery from the negative impacts of the crisis (“recovering”) and strengthen local and national economic and social systems to protect development gains from current and future shocks (“transforming”). The resilience approach aimed to address multiple dimensions of the crisis and, as pointed out in many evaluations, the focus on the concept of resilience was a concrete effort to create greater linkages between humanitarian and development approaches. This approach was conceived in alignment with the United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration (2009) and was anchored in the need to simultaneously target refugees and host communities to recover with long-term development prospects.

9. In 2015, a structured United Nations regional response plan, the 3RP, was launched to respond to a growing need for an integrated humanitarian and development approach, as by then it was evident that refugees would be in the host countries for a longer period and that it was a protracted crisis of an unprecedented scale.

10. The key activities of UNDP in response to the Syrian refugee crisis entail support to livelihood and employment, improving basic service delivery, enhancing social cohesion and peace, promoting resilience-based approaches and the humanitarian-development nexus, coordination of 3RP at the regional and country levels and mobilization of resources for 3RP and advocacy (See figure). A theory of change was developed for this evaluation. UNDP expenditure for the Syrian refugee crisis response for 2014-2018 was \$317 million, with Lebanon having significantly higher expenditure compared to other refugee-hosting countries, including Turkey which hosts the highest number of refugees.



### III. Key findings

11. This section presents the UNDP contribution to different areas of the Syrian refugee crisis response, its strategies and concepts and operationalization of the 3RP framework. It also analyses UNDP positioning and strategies based on the assessment of the response to crises in the Lake Chad Basin, Myanmar (Rohingya) and Venezuela.

#### A. Syrian refugee crisis response

##### National policy support and institutional capacity development

12. UNDP is well regarded for its development support and played a visible role in the Syrian refugee crisis response. UNDP has been responsive to municipal service needs which were critical given the significant increase in demand due to the influx of refugees. With its well-established working relationships with national entities, UNDP is widely perceived as a trusted and “go to” agency by the host Governments. Support for policy analysis and knowledge-sharing informed institutional reform processes and strengthening. Across the host countries, the reputation and reach of UNDP enabled engagement with a range of government entities at the national level.

13. There were several missed opportunities in leveraging UNDP work at the subnational level. UNDP has yet to build on its comparative strengths and organizational expertise for policy engagement. Long-standing work at the municipal level has yet to be used to play a more comprehensive role at the subnational level and enable local and

national government linkages. Government entities recognize the significance of resilience-based policy and programme approaches as the way forward, but sustainable programme models have yet to be promoted to respond to development needs and priorities.

#### **The UNDP role and contribution to the 3RP**

14. **3RP: Setting a precedent.** The 3RP was successful in bringing together two interrelated dimensions of the Syrian refugee crisis response: humanitarian support; and a resilience-based development approach to strengthening institutions, communities and households, under a common framework. UNHCR and UNDP should be credited for developing this joint framework that goes beyond the limits of their respective mandates. UNDP played a key role in leading the United Nations in the conceptualization of the resilience approach in the refugee crisis response.

15. A flexible 3RP framework allowed the development of context-specific national response plans. There were constraints in the extent to which 3RP could enable development solutions for improving the condition of the refugees. A key accomplishment of the 3RP was bringing together humanitarian and development actors on a single platform at the regional and national levels to address the humanitarian and development needs of Syrian refugees, affected host communities and national systems in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. UNDP rallied all United Nations development agencies to support the adoption of the resilience-based approach within the United Nations Development Group.<sup>1</sup>

16. UNDP support to the coordination of the 3RP, jointly with UNHCR, had some tangible outcomes which include significant mobilization of financial resources, strengthened coordination among United Nations agencies and information exchange for a more coordinated response among various actors. The 3RP has also served as an effective platform for advocacy with the concerned Governments to promote resilience-based programming. The partnership between UNDP and UNHCR has immense potential to strengthen the humanitarian-development-nexus agenda. Some areas need to be addressed by both agencies to reinforce this partnership for enhanced contributions to host communities and refugees.

17. The 3RP has been successful in mobilizing resources, thus meeting the international commitment of the Grand Bargain, an agreement between key donors agreed at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. The inter-agency appeal for the resilience component has increased over the years. High-level events such as the Resilience Development Forum and continued advocacy for resilience at the regional level by UNDP resulted in an increase of 3RP resilience funding from \$2 billion in 2015 to \$2.3 billion in 2019, of which UNDP received \$396.7 million. The UNDP contribution to resource mobilization with UNHCR is significant.

18. **Enabling coordination.** The large number and wide range of 3RP partners required considerable investment in coordination processes for UNDP. UNDP co-led coordination processes with UNHCR at the regional and national levels and led sectoral coordination in livelihoods and social cohesion. UNDP also played a key role in monitoring the 3RP implementation. There are several examples of joint programmes with United Nations agencies where complementarities and comparative strengths of the agencies were optimized. UNDP is credited with bringing in stronger government engagement in the 3RP at the national level.

19. In addition to the 3RP, there are multiple refugee and host community responses and coordination mechanisms at the country level. While these coordination mechanisms

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<sup>1</sup> Now the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

reflect the preferences of donor agencies in programme response, the 3RP nevertheless had limitations in providing a viable alternative for a more comprehensive response. Although coordination was important in the initial years of the refugee crisis, a heavy coordination architecture has had many redundancies as the crisis became protracted. UNDP and UNHCR should assess the present architecture to adapt it to evolving needs.

**20. Facilitating a resilience approach.** UNDP promoted a common understanding of the concept of resilience at planning and programme levels through workshops, training and advocacy at multiple levels in the first years of the 3RP. The Dead Sea Resilience Agenda, developed by UNDP in the second year of the 3RP, was a key milestone in furthering the resilience strategy at the regional level and increasing funding for resilience since 2015. The agenda's principles and actions provided a common basis for resilience-based responses across the 3RP countries. UNDP organized the Resilience Development Forum which boosted new partnerships and enabled setting the stage for resilience-based programming. While the 3RP is a significant step forward in providing an opportunity to promote development approaches in humanitarian response, there remain areas where sustained efforts are needed by both UNDP and UNHCR as well as the donors to strengthen approaches to the humanitarian-development nexus. Implementation of the resilience approach was difficult when funding was fragmented and change processes to consolidating nexus initiatives were slow.

21. The Subregional Response Facility for the Syria Crisis, established by UNDP, played an important role in setting the resilience agenda, enabling 3RP deliberations and financial decision-making processes. UNDP investment in the facility was an important contribution to its co-leadership with UNHCR and in positioning UNDP in the centre of the Syrian refugee crisis response. It strengthened UNDP engagement and partnerships with the international community, non-governmental organizations and among United Nations agencies. A significant contribution of the facility is the success in bringing resilience into financial discussions and decision-making.

**22. Employment generation and livelihoods.** UNDP employment and livelihood support to the Syrian population and vulnerable host communities comprised support to vocational training to increase work opportunities, support to small businesses, improving the supply capacity for skills and labour absorption in the value chain, improving institutional processes, networking with the private sector and cash for work.

23. UNDP was the only United Nations agency with a presence in the poorest areas such as Akkar in Lebanon and was among the first to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis. UNDP was able to respond quickly to the crisis, building on its continuous presence, previous interventions and strong partnerships with local authorities. Similarly in Turkey, UNDP had long-standing programme engagement in the Southeastern Anatolia region which received the highest number of refugees. Support to job creation, as part of both development and refugee-response initiatives for host communities and refugees, had tangible short- to medium-term outcomes. UNDP programme support contributed to the development of inclusive and sustainable value-chain models. Micro examples of success need to be scaled up to address the employment challenges of host communities and Syrian refugees. The support for small and medium-sized enterprises and value chains are areas where joint efforts can enable strategic thinking or models that would generate employment at scale and inform policies.

24. There are good examples of value-chain support in Lebanon and employment-generation models of scale in Turkey. In Turkey, where economic inclusion is seen as a model for ensuring effective social inclusion, programmes ensured that Syrians and Turkish nationals worked together in the same workplaces. UNDP contributed to the promotion of modern practices, enhancing productivity and competitiveness in strategic sectors through a mix of national policy support for total factor productivity and the establishment of model industrial modernization centres. Such efforts are important in

generating employment at scale that would provide work for Turkish nationals and Syrian refugees. Also in Turkey, UNDP has well-established relationships at the subnational level with the private sector and chambers of commerce and has been successful in establishing links with the emerging Syrian business sector.

25. UNDP and other 3RP agencies recognize the need for well-targeted long-term vocational training that would lead to employment. However, there is no planned approach to vocational training that enables linkages to employment or financing for enterprise development, and it was not evident that the 3RP platform could address some of these challenges. Except for Turkey, a major constraint in supporting vocational training that has job prospects is the restrictions concerning areas where refugees are allowed to work. Partnerships with United Nations agencies show the potential of joint initiatives.

**26. Strengthening services and local development.** Local-level engagement of UNDP is highly relevant, and efforts to strengthen municipalities assume importance given their capacities and resource challenges. Support for infrastructure development and service delivery has been critical for both host communities and the Syrian population. The refugee influx has put considerable pressure on the already overstretched municipal services across the countries hosting Syrian refugees. The municipalities which received refugees were already facing huge gaps in the provision of services and it is was challenging both in terms of resources and capacities. Disrupted local services increased vulnerabilities and have been drivers of tensions between the refugees and host communities. In all the countries hosting Syrian refugees, it was also an opportunity to improve service infrastructures, strengthen service delivery processes and adopt more efficient models. Municipalities needed to increase their capacities in proportion to the increase in population created by the presence of Syrians. UNDP supported the strengthening of local services and municipal capacity development. Support for solid waste and wastewater management, firefighting services and municipal capacity enhancement are high priorities identified by the Government and the international community as an essential part of the Syrian crisis response.

27. A strength of the UNDP response is its strong programme engagement at the local level. Building on its previous development partnerships, UNDP has made significant contributions at the local level to respond quickly to the crisis. UNDP contributed to addressing immediate basic services which were under pressure due to the influx of Syrian refugees.

28. Strengthening of municipal services has been well structured, enabling municipalities to address institutional challenges. The municipalities considered the development approach used by UNDP to address the service delivery challenges as appropriate both to address immediate requirements and institutional bottlenecks. Partnerships built on long-term relationships enabled speedy strategizing and implementation. Technical support for capacity enhancement was critical in moving forward with the implementation of the plans, particularly in the area of solid waste management. Municipalities also consider UNDP administrative and procurement procedures as efficient, enabling a quick response. There were contributions to strengthening the capacities of local institutions to develop and implement integrated local development plans that respond to priority community needs.

29. UNDP support to solid waste management assumes importance given the significant challenges it posed across the countries hosting refugees. UNDP demonstrated that a development approach to strengthening services, rather than a humanitarian approach of substituting services, has the potential for positive long-term outcomes, contributing to strengthening the capacities of the municipalities. The subnational programme models which UNDP promoted have yet to inform national strategies, reducing the level of contribution to development outcomes. Across the countries hosting refugees, in addition

to the infrastructure-related investments, there has been technical support to ensure a coherent approach to waste management and municipal services. In Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and to some extent Egypt, support to solid waste management eased the pressure on the municipalities.

30. Although the Syrian refugee crisis worsened solid waste management, this has been a long-pending issue in most of the host countries. Despite a high per capita amount of humanitarian aid, there were challenges in finding a sustainable solution and the reasons for this are beyond funding and required political will, clarity on institutional roles and an enabling policy environment.

## **B. Cross-cutting issues**

31. **Private sector development.** Across refugee contexts, there is an urgent need to de-risk investments and address institutional bottlenecks for private sector development and engagement. Attention to private sector engagement was mixed in the countries hosting refugees, including in middle-income countries where there is a comparatively better enabling environment. There are some good examples in Lebanon and Turkey, and important lessons to draw from positive examples of support to competitive and inclusive industrial transformation for long-term income generation and employment solutions in Turkey. However, in most initiatives, there is often a disconnect between UNDP business development support and value-chain engagement. Linking its interventions to a well-coordinated strategy spanning the full range of the value chain has been a challenge for UNDP programmes. UNDP programmes did not reflect this urgency. With exceptions, fostering of transformative partnerships with the private sector was lacking in support for refugees and host communities.

32. **Gender-inclusive refugee response.** UNDP had more success in its women-specific initiatives at the micro level in promoting income generation and enterprise skills and access to services. UNDP has contributed to advancing women's empowerment at the micro level. In all livelihood interventions, there has been due effort to include women among the beneficiaries. Opportunities for gender-informed programme design and implementation remain underutilized. Lack of a coordinated response at the 3RP level undermined tackling multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls in the refugee and host communities. With women comprising about half of the refugee population and more than half of the host populations, efforts on the ground are not commensurate with the response needed.

## **C. Global, regional and country-level positioning**

33. **Global positioning..** Globally, UNDP contributed to bringing a development approach to its humanitarian refugee response and efforts towards consolidating the humanitarian-development nexus. The UNDP contribution has been important to enabling the transformation process in the international discourse in protracted refugee crises by bringing in a development and resilience approach. UNHCR and UNDP, through the 3RP, set a precedent for a joint humanitarian and development programme. Although the 3RP was not used to its full potential, it was successful in bringing resilience to the refugee response, addressing the challenges of refugees and the host communities.

34. In 2016, UNDP and UNHCR endorsed the Commitment to Action and the "New way of working" at the World Humanitarian Summit, which was a turning point towards operationalizing the humanitarian-development nexus, along with the adoption by the General Assembly of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the comprehensive refugee-response framework. Fundamental to the New York Declaration and the framework is the affirmation that protecting refugees and supporting host countries that shelter refugees are both international responsibilities. It is noteworthy that the framework was informed by the 3RP resilience approach. UNHCR went beyond



humanitarian response, adopting a resilience and self-reliance approach for its work. These milestones established international norms for sustainable solutions simultaneously during the humanitarian response, where the UNDP contribution was important. Although the implementation of the framework is gathering momentum, it is nevertheless significant given the intergovernmental endorsement. Despite its contributions, UNDP has not asserted its comparative advantage in furthering the centrality of development in protracted crises at the global and country levels.

**35. Regional positioning.** The 3RP enabled UNDP to position the resilience approach to refugee crises at the regional level and the momentum generated is added value in responding to other crises such as the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Besides the 3RP, there were efforts such as the Regional Stabilization Facility for Lake Chad Basin to facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy. The facility, launched in 2019, is modelled on the successful experience of the UNDP Stabilization Facility in Iraq. It is intended to serve as a coordination tool for harmonizing complementary projects and programmes for stabilization, security, governance and early recovery, and to facilitate regional knowledge management. This is a promising initiative with the support of key donors (Governments of Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and the European Union).

**36. Country-level positioning.** Due to its support to development and crisis response over several decades, subnational engagement and trust of national counterparts, UNDP is in an advantageous position at the country level. UNDP has supported varying levels of refugee response and strengthening of host-country policies, programmes and institutions in about 40 countries. Building on its development mandate, UNDP formulated the resilience approach as its offering for anchoring development support during humanitarian response.

37. In its response to the Syrian refugee crisis, UNDP used the resilience approach to address the development challenges that were intensified by the influx of refugees. The resilience approach reinforced the international position that the humanitarian-development nexus is critical to providing effective solutions to host communities and refugees. The ambiguity of the resilience concept to some extent also provided country offices with the flexibility to adapt the concept and apply it according to their particular contexts. More importantly, it provided a neutral concept when development investments were not acceptable, particularly providing more flexibility for donor funding.

38. UNDP programme positioning has been comparatively stronger in the rapid response to such emergencies as the Syrian refugee crisis and Rohingya crisis, compared to slow-onset refugee crises such as the Lake Chad Basin. Part of the reason for the comparatively better response to the rapid-onset crises is early positioning by UNDP to address the development challenges of the refugee influx. Funding for the development dimensions of slow-onset crises remains a challenge in coordinated partnerships. This is also a reason for duplication of efforts to accelerate the transition from humanitarian response to medium-term strategies to reduce the vulnerability of displaced populations and host communities and strengthen their resilience to future crises.

39. The UNDP comparative advantage is its continuous engagement to progressively build capacities and policies/regulatory frameworks in key development areas. However, the extent to which UNDP leveraged its comparative advantage and opportunities to build on its development support varied across countries and programme areas. UNDP has yet to play a catalytic role in enabling sustainable long-term development and peace solutions through institutional development and policy processes. While the Syrian crisis response provided opportunities for promoting the resilience approach, UNDP has yet to harness this momentum to provide medium- to long-term sectoral solutions at the country level.

## IV. Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. The UNDP contribution to global debates and formulation of intergovernmental agreements to further the humanitarian-development nexus in refugee response has been significant. UNDP is well regarded for its multi-stakeholder engagement in a range of development and crisis areas. UNDP has a niche in the global humanitarian-development nexus policy space. UNDP has yet to assert its role in accelerating the humanitarian-development nexus at the global and country levels.**

40. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has continued its efforts to advance the humanitarian-development nexus through global summits and intergovernmental agreements. The global consensus expressed in the endorsement of the Commitment to Action and the new way of working at the World Humanitarian Summit, followed by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the comprehensive refugee-response framework, are significant steps in giving renewed thrust to bridging the humanitarian-development divide. UNDP global engagement and contribution in the intergovernmental events and discussions have been important in reinforcing the importance of development linkages in humanitarian response. UNDP collaboration with the humanitarian agencies enabled efforts to reinforce the importance of development linkages in refugee response and enabling durable solutions. Through its resilience approach, UNDP continued to advocate for concerted global action to advance the humanitarian-development nexus in refugee response.

41. A lack of an explicit commitment to addressing the development dimensions of displacement as a corporate priority is undermining UNDP positioning. Prioritization of engagement in conflict-related refugee crises, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States region in the context of multiple crises, to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is not commensurate with the challenges in the region. Although not exclusively focused on refugee and displacement issues, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (2013) and the more recently established Regional Stabilization Strategy of the Lake Chad Basin Commission are important initiatives. However, they have yet to develop wider partnerships and funding mechanisms to address significant challenges of complex and multiple crises in the region. In the Arab States region, UNDP has yet to outline its plan for engaging in refugee-related and other displacements, to harmonize its programmes in Africa and the Arab States for more strategic engagement.

42. The complexity of the protracted crisis-response contexts in which Governments and international actors intend to implement the humanitarian-development nexus, triple nexus or the new way of working means there is a lack of practical models. With the urgency and intensity of growing refugee and other displacement crises, UNDP at the corporate level did not rise to expectations to provide thought leadership in spearheading the United Nations nexus agenda.

43. The UNDP refugee response has evolved in the past decade with programmes at different levels in over 40 countries. Building on its long development presence, UNDP strategically consolidated its refugee programming and contribution at the country level in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. Because UNDP works with national as well as subnational government actors, its programmes have the potential to inform policy and planning in the areas of employment and social services.

**Conclusion 2. UNDP was successful in bringing a resilience approach to the Syrian crisis-response discourse, which is a significant contribution by itself, notwithstanding the implementation challenges.**

44. Its long programme presence in the areas that received Syrian refugees enabled UNDP to respond to the crisis as well as facilitate response by other United Nations agencies. UNDP was better prepared than several other agencies in analysing and responding to local challenges, contributing to strengthening institutional processes and public service delivery. While there were missed opportunities, efforts to address service delivery challenges contributed to reducing the pressure of a large refugee presence on local systems.

45. At the country level, UNDP brought a resilience approach to the centre of the Syrian refugee crisis response. Further concerted efforts were lacking to integrate resilience-based approaches in protracted humanitarian response. Lack of shared understanding among United Nations agencies on linking humanitarian and development initiatives is a lost opportunity for improving the conditions of both refugees and host communities.

46. Humanitarian assistance continues to focus predominantly on refugee populations while resilience activities entail support to host communities and refugees. The lack of more holistic models that would generate employment at scale and enable service delivery solutions by addressing institutional bottlenecks continues to be an issue.

47. An extended humanitarian phase in a protracted crisis, when the response that is needed is medium- to long-term development support, has negative implications for both the host communities and refugees. The high per capita financial response to the Syrian refugee crisis predominantly achieved humanitarian aims and addressed immediate development concerns. The 3RP could not keep pace with mounting development needs that also underpin the Syrian refugee response. A skewed funding architecture predisposed towards humanitarian support undermined more sustainable development solutions that would benefit host communities and refugees. While UNDP has been consistent in its support to host communities, without an overall framework for addressing the interlinking dimensions of refugee and host community development challenges, the scope of programme outcomes was reduced.

**Conclusion 3. The partnership between UNDP and UNHCR has been significant in bringing a resilience perspective to the Syrian refugee crisis response. UNDP jointly with UNHCR played a key role in the coordination of 3RP, a formidable task given the large scale of response.**

48. The UNDP-UNHCR partnership contributed to effective coordination of the Syrian refugee crisis response in the host countries and enabled resource mobilization. The commitment by the senior management of UNHCR and UNDP to strengthen programme collaborations has been important in keeping the momentum to bridge the humanitarian-development divide. The extent to which such collaborations are taken forward in other crises varied, with promising collaborations in the Lake Chad Basin. While there are ongoing efforts to strengthen the partnership between the two agencies at the corporate level, these have yet to be institutionalized for engagement to further the humanitarian-development nexus.

49. The partnership has yet to consolidate programmes based on the comparative advantages of the two agencies for enhanced development and humanitarian outcomes. The Syria partnership shows that lack of common outcomes and multi-year programme frameworks reduced the contribution of the 3RP. An issue that can blur the mandates and increase humanitarian programme windows is the interest of humanitarian agencies to venture into the development space instead of collaborating with agencies with a development mandate. Although a sensitive issue, reducing the humanitarian

programme window has the potential to accelerate development processes and improved outcomes and improved outcomes for host communities and refugees. While the humanitarian-development nexus is seen as a way forward, agencies have yet to deliberate on this issue for meaningful solutions.

**Conclusion 4. UNDP was successful in providing employment models when there was a longer programme time frame and interventions were anchored in its development support.**

50. The UNDP Syrian crisis response was aligned with the priorities identified by the host countries. It aimed to address income-generation and service delivery challenges of both the Syrian population and the host communities. The support for competitiveness in Turkey and agrivalue chain support in Lebanon and Turkey addressed institutional bottlenecks for refugee and host community employment. Notwithstanding such important successes, UNDP livelihood interventions tend to be scattered, small-scale and uncoordinated, which reduced the contribution to sustainable employment

51. Balancing short-term interventions with long-term livelihood and employment support is critical for income generation for the Syrian population. UNDP programmes are evolving to achieve this balance. Livelihood support focused more on issues such as vocational training, with mixed outcomes in terms of sustainability and scale. 3RP interventions remain individually small-scale and fragmented, with a focus on short-term income generation.

52. The 2016 London Conference pledged the creation of 1.1 million jobs by 2018, mostly in Lebanon and Turkey, which host a substantial proportion of the refugee population. While there are commitments to open their labour markets and improve the domestic regulatory environment, this has yet to happen. The international support to employment-creation programmes and access to external markets notwithstanding, there remain significant gaps in durable solutions in employment and livelihoods. The enabling environment for Syrian labour integration has not been favourable, especially when coupled with the economic downturn in host countries, which added to existing employment challenges with further limitations for labour-market absorption. The number of work permits provided by the host countries continues to be low although there are ongoing efforts to accelerate the process. The varying levels of economic recession require more concerted strategies to create more employment opportunities for refugee and host populations. Barring examples such as the support to improve competitiveness, UNDP engagement has been limited in responding to some of these challenges.

**Conclusion 5. The development approach to strengthening services in refugee contexts contributed to strengthening municipal capacities and providing replicable models.**

53. As a key actor in strengthening local services in the areas where refugees are concentrated, UNDP has well conceptualized its support to municipal services, contributing to stronger municipal capacities in solid waste management and social services. However, the scale of the deterioration of solid waste management services is not matched by the scope of effort at the policy and institutional levels. In Jordan and Lebanon, efforts are still aimed at coping with the situation rather than enabling transformative solutions in improving services. The renewable energy sector is another area where UNDP has the potential to engage and there are ongoing efforts. There is considerable scope for demonstrating renewable energy models, informing policies for systemic changes and sustaining the interest of the private sector.

54. UNDP has invested in municipal development needs, conflict analysis and other assessments, which is highly relevant for strengthening local planning and financing. Strengthening and institutionalizing municipal-level development needs assessments

and linking them to collection of data for the Sustainable Development Goals has the potential to inform refugee and host community development responses. Efforts are slowly evolving in making linkages between refugee response and planning for the Goals, an area where joint United Nations efforts will be important.

**Conclusion 6. The 3RP approach is relevant with a much needed emphasis on bringing a resilience dimension to humanitarian response. The compartmentalization of humanitarian and resilience support has significantly undermined the contribution of the overall Syrian refugee crisis response.**

55. While there is a realization among the 3RP agencies that addressing the development challenges of host communities is essential for an effective refugee response, such a realization did not result in pursuing a coordinated resilience approach. The continued humanitarian mode of response was not appropriate in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey when more advanced development solutions are needed. The United Nations system had limitations in enabling a long-term approach to the protracted crisis, and in addressing underlying development constraints in host countries which are critical for comprehensive and conflict-sensitive refugee response. The argument that middle-income host countries will fund their development activities does not hold in the context of an enormous refugee influx which must be included in development efforts.

56. The narrative of a resilience approach underpinning national 3RP responses is evolving. While UNDP prioritized engagement in coordination, it has yet to position itself with a strong value proposition to promote medium- to long-term resilience approaches. The 3RP at the country level continues to operate in a mode that is most suitable during immediate crisis response, undermining a holistic approach to sustainably address the development consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis response. A related issue that needs wider discussion among humanitarian agencies is the longer humanitarian programme windows that are now sidling into development programme windows with implications for resilience and durable solutions for refugees and host communities alike.

57. The 3RP did not address the issue of safe return, an important but at the same time politically sensitive and contentious issue. The Brussels conferences on support to Syrian crisis response have been consistent in emphasizing that there will not be any support for a safe return unless outstanding political issues in Syria are resolved. In all host countries, there was tension between the refugees and host communities accompanied by intermittent political posturings. There were minimal advocacy efforts by the 3RP in bringing into the Brussels deliberations the issues of a safe and voluntary return. As the global experiences of refugee crises have shown, the longer the delay in addressing the issue of safe return, the lesser the possibility of returning to the home country.

**Conclusion 7. With exceptions across the 3RP countries, private sector engagement received limited attention and is a critical gap in host community and refugee support. The low scale and slow pace of UNDP private sector engagement impacted efforts towards more sustainable solutions.**

58. Private sector development and engagement that are well adapted to address resilience and humanitarian challenges, create employment of scale and catalyse municipal development, all are critical to crisis response. While there are examples of private sector partnerships across UNDP programmes, a more structured approach to private sector development is in the early stages and has yet to be strategically pursued. This impacted the scope of UNDP responses and the nature of outcomes for the host communities and refugees. As the UNDP support for improving competitiveness in

Turkey shows, the private sector can play an important role in creating jobs of scale. Such examples are yet to be scaled up by UNDP.

59. The UNDP comparative advantage in policy development and programme implementation provides avenues to act as an interface for the private sector with government. While UNDP corporately has shown a commitment to private sector development, it is not addressed in refugee and host community programming even in the Syrian refugee crisis response which is predominantly in middle-income countries, reducing the UNDP contribution. The host countries present varied policy and development contexts which necessitate innovative private sector finance tools. UNDP lacked country-level strategies for sector-specific engagement to derisk the policy space. The scale of UNDP private sector engagement continues to be low when compared to the possibilities the country contexts present.

**Conclusion 8. The UNDP contribution to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment in refugee response reflects the lack of priority to this area. Specific measures to address institutional gaps and other capacity challenges in gender-inclusive policies and programmes that would benefit both host communities and refugees were not prioritized.**

60. UNDP paid attention to including women as recipients of its support across interventions, at times exceeding the expectations set out in the results frameworks. However, efforts to systematically address constraints in enabling gender-inclusive policy frameworks and resource investments for mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment are lacking. Limitations were especially apparent in contexts where there were enormous gender-related challenges that needed comprehensive solutions for achieving peacebuilding and development outcomes.

61. UNDP has yet to clarify its role and contribution to gender-inclusive programming and practice in crisis contexts and how it will be pursued. There is considerable scope for strengthening strategic partnerships in advocacy efforts and addressing institutional constraints. While there are joint projects, partnerships between UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) lack a strategic work programme that identifies their respective roles and division of labour to enhance the overall contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

## V. Recommendations

**Recommendation 1. Addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in crisis contexts, including refugee contexts, is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP should now invest resources to provide thought leadership in promoting practical humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches at the country level.**

62. UNDP should outline its corporate strategy for engagement in protracted crises that affect refugees, and the areas and approaches it will prioritize. UNDP should clarify the concepts it offers, invest resources in their operationalization and take specific measures to promote them for wider use. Steps should be taken to ensure that the UNDP resilience offering promotes linkages with humanitarian response rather than as a parallel activity. Measures also should be taken to strengthen regional strategies to comprehensively address protracted refugee crises and their interface with conflict.

**Recommendation 2. UNDP should build on its 3RP experience on municipal assessments to prioritize data and subnational assessments that would inform humanitarian, development and nexus initiatives as well as the consolidation of data for the Sustainable Development Goals.**

63. Learning from the 3RP experience, in conflict and refugee contexts, UNDP should prioritize support to data for the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the capacities to collect, manage, analyse and feed the data into policy processes. UNDP has supported the development and conflict-sensitivity analysis at the municipal level in countries hosting refugees but needs a streamlined approach to institutionalize data-collection processes and ensure uniformity and quality to be able to link them to the Goals and policy processes. UNDP should forge corporate-level collaborations with United Nations agencies to avoid duplication of efforts at the country and local levels.

**Recommendation 3. UNDP should play a catalytic role in enabling private sector solutions to promote the resilience of both host communities and Syrian refugees. UNDP should develop private sector country strategies as its 3RP offering, to address context-specific issues and institutional bottlenecks; and develop mechanisms to derisk the policy environment to facilitate investments for sustainable livelihoods and employment.**

64. The UNDP corporate private sector strategy was approved recently and assessments were carried out to inform its engagement with the private sector in crisis contexts. Moving forward, UNDP should be consistent in the implementation of private sector development initiatives in 3RP countries, prioritizing this as a key offering. UNDP should strengthen its capacities to increase the pace of its engagement with appropriate tools, particularly in contexts of conflict in the least developed countries. UNDP should adapt tools for engaging the private sector in value-chain development and investment in the service sector and, where possible, leverage impact investment, capacities and policy frameworks. UNDP should partner with financial intermediaries that are expanding their businesses in areas of UNDP support.

65. One of the areas of UNDP strength in 3RP countries is substantive engagement at the local level, which should be used to leverage private sector engagement in addressing development challenges. To be successful, there should be considerable flexibility in the use of tools, combining long-term goals with short-term milestones.

**Recommendation 4. UNDP should consolidate partnerships with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to promote approaches based on the humanitarian-development nexus and resilience in the Syrian refugee crisis response. UNDP and UNHCR have embarked upon a significant partnership to bridge the humanitarian-development divide and there is need for continued commitment to further strengthen this alliance.**

66. UNDP should further consolidate partnerships with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to promote programming based on the humanitarian-development nexus in 3RP countries and reduce compartmentalization of refugee-related development support and other development programming in the country.

67. The joint UNHCR-UNDP action plan is an important step forward in outlining areas of global and country-level collaboration. The action plan should clarify the way forward in enabling development linkages with humanitarian initiatives at the country level, rather than programmes in two areas implemented in parallel. Lessons from 3RP will be important, particularly in developing common outcomes for future collaborations at the country level. UNDP should clarify expectations regarding its resource investments and explore cost-sharing mechanisms.

**Recommendation 5. UNDP jointly with UNHCR should consider scaling down the 3RP architecture so it is fit for purpose.**

68. An almost decade-long crisis response needs catalytic initiatives and advocacy that demonstrate a holistic approach to humanitarian challenges rather than investments primarily in a heavy 3RP coordination mechanism. Refocusing the 3RP and anchoring it in medium- to longer-term development outcomes would enable durable solutions for refugees and sustainable outcomes for the host countries. Such refocusing may necessitate alternate structures, strategic selection of intervention areas and a renewed

resource mobilization agenda. Leveraging 3RP resources for additional private sector financing should be prioritized.

**Recommendation 6. UNDP should build partnerships to boost the scale and scope of support for gender-related initiatives. Resource constraints in addressing gender equality in refugee response are no different than challenges in development programming.**

69. UNDP should outline sectoral areas where it will be consistently engaged. A sectoral focus will enable UNDP to provide well-tested transformative solutions, engage the private sector and build partnerships for enhanced gender outcomes.

70. Support for gender equality and women's empowerment needs resources. UNDP has been a pioneer in institutionalizing measures such as the minimum budget of 15 per cent of programme resources for gender programming in crisis contexts, which is now a United Nations system-wide policy. UNDP should follow the standards it set and take measures to strengthen organizational capacities to respond appropriately to gender challenges.

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