

MAIN FINDINGS

2014 Assessment: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)¹

CONTEXT

UNHCR...

...was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950 in recognition of the United Nations' responsibility to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Since then, resolutions of the General Assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have further developed the organisation's mandate: refining its responsibilities with respect to refugees and asylum seekers; formalising its functions regarding returnees and stateless persons; and conferring it authority under certain conditions to engage with internally displaced persons.

...operates in a context that has placed significant demands on the organisation's capacities, with a number of simultaneous large-scale emergency crises in complex political situations since 2011, contributing to the highest ever displacement figures.

...was also assessed by MOPAN in 2011.

KEY STRENGTHS OF UNHCR

- UNHCR is a unique multilateral agency that, since its founding in 1950, has **adapted to vastly changed world circumstances and humanitarian needs**.
- UNHCR has a **relevant, clear and valued mandate** that has evolved over time to protect, provide assistance and seek permanent solutions for refugees as well as other persons of concern.
- UNHCR is continuing **delegation of authority** for operational and management decisions to country and regional offices.
- UNHCR has taken key steps to **apply the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda**. This Humanitarian Reform process was initiated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in 2005 to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership.
- UNHCR has a good reputation for the **quality of its policy dialogue and how it uses advocacy** to enhance protection for refugees and other persons of concern.
- UNHCR uses **reliable needs-assessments** to inform its humanitarian operations.

KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR UNHCR

- UNHCR is seen as making positive contributions to results. However, at the moment the organisation's **reporting and performance measurement systems do not provide a clear and complete picture** of how it is improving the circumstances and well-being of persons of concern.
- UNHCR **could better link its corporate results framework with its strategic plan**, so that organisation-wide results can be clearly articulated and measured.
- Greater **structural independence may be required for the evaluation function**, in combination with adequate financial support and management buy-in. UNHCR should also develop a regular and systematic process for follow-up on evaluation recommendations.
- UNHCR has been working actively to improve its **relationships with its implementing and operational partners** but further improvements are needed.
- As with other organisations engaged in humanitarian action, there is **room for improvement in the use of evidence in decision making and reporting**.

1. This document presents the main findings from MOPAN's 2014 "Synthesis Report" of the UNHCR assessment. The full assessment with technical annexes and the organisation's management response are available at: www.mopanonline.org