



Applying the HDP nexus approach to better respond to forced displacement

Lessons and experiences from the partnership between German Development
Cooperation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by Division G21, Displaced Persons and Host Countries of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The views expressed in this report are those of the independent external experts from IOD PARC and the Global Public Policy Institute and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Deutsch Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations or its Member States.

The conceptualisation, management and quality assurance of the study was a joint endeavour of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Deutsch Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). We would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors of the study for their excellent cooperation as well as all those who contributed their perspectives and assessments to this study.

The IOD PARC and GPPI team would like to thank Athisia Muir and Lennart Bendfeldt-Huthmann from GIZ and Lisa Catharina Meiser, Florian Hildebrandt and Joel Kinahan from UNHCR for their ongoing support throughout the joint study. We are particularly grateful to GIZ and UNHCR colleagues as well as government stakeholders, partners, and displaced and host communities for their valuable contributions to data collection and validation. The authors of this report additionally would like to thank Steering Group members from BMZ, GIZ and UNHCR for their consistently helpful and constructive advice and feedback which provided the team with guidance at critical points of the study process.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
ANRPTS	National Civil Registration Agency, Mauritania
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSO	Civil society organisation
ESDS	Energy Solutions in Displacement Settings
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GPPI	Global Public Policy Institute
HQ	Headquarters
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace (nexus)
ID	Identity document
IDA	International Development Association, World Bank
IDP	Internally displaced person
ILO	International Labor Organisation
INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Union
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIDEC	Ministry of Interior and Decentralisation, Mauritania
Nexus Norte	SUN-GP project implemented in Mozambique
NDP3	National Development Plan 3, Uganda
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ProNexus	SUN-GP project implemented in Mauritania
REF	Refugee Engagement Forum, Uganda
RISE	Refugee Inclusion Accelerator
SDO	Senior Development Officer
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SUN-GP	Support to UNHCR in Facilitating the Operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Global Programme
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Acronyms and Abbreviations	3
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	12
Synthesis of study findings	17
Interest area 1: Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities in partnership set-up and project design	17
Interest area 2: Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities on HDP approaches for GCR implementation	23
Conclusions	34
Annex 1	40
Annex 2	43
Annex 3	45
Annex 4	46

List of Figures

Figure 1. SUN-GP focus areas and intended outputs	13
Figure 2. Modality definitions	19
Figure 3. Steps for developing the monitoring and learning framework	22
Figure 4. Joint Study Conceptual Framework	40
Figure 5. Developmental Evaluation approach joint study focus	41
Figure 6. Timeline and milestones of the joint study process	41
Figure 7. Six steps for developing the monitoring and learning framework	45

List of Tables

Table 1. Joint study recommendation areas	11
Table 2. Joint study interest areas and sub-questions	15
Table 3. Recommendations tailored to relevant stakeholders	39
Table 4. Context and partnership enabling and constraining factors	44
Table 5. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations	47

Executive Summary

Since 2018, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have worked together to implement the Global Programme Support to UNHCR in Facilitating the Operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (SUN Global Programme or SUN-GP). SUN-GP is a collaborative GIZ-UNHCR initiative, leveraging each agency's complementary strengths to implement HDP nexus approaches and operationalise the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Additionally, SUN-GP served as a platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing, and lesson learning. It enabled partners to refine HDP nexus approaches and promoted sustainable solutions for displaced populations and host communities.

Purpose and scope of this study

This joint study was conducted between February 2022 and March 2025 by IOD PARC in partnership with the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi). It focuses on UNHCR-GIZ cooperation within SUN-GP to answer: 'How can HDP nexus approaches be used to better respond to forced displacement and put into practice the objectives of the GCR?' It documents lessons learnt, achievements, and areas requiring improvement in future collaborations. The study is primarily aimed at supporting learning for UNHCR and GIZ, but also by other humanitarian and development actors seeking to engage in HDP partnerships.

The study has the following main focuses:

- › **UNHCR-GIZ partnership focus:** i) comparative advantages of UNHCR and German Development Cooperation; ii) SUN-GP implementation models; and iii) contextual and partnership enabling and constraining factors; and,
- › **HDP approaches focus:** i) setting of collective outcomes for GCR implementation; ii) contributions to collective outcomes; and iii) Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and conflict sensitivity as cross-cutting issues.

The joint study builds on findings from an iterative process of extensive document reviews, in-country and desk-based data collection, and stakeholder consultations. Field missions and follow-ups were conducted in Mexico, Mauritania, and Mozambique. Desk-based research covered Niger, Ethiopia, and Uganda.

Key findings

SUN-GP has supported host governments in integrating refugee support into national development frameworks by providing funding and technical expertise and fostering long-term planning aimed at the inclusion of refugees in national systems and economies. The collaboration between GIZ and UNHCR has strengthened in-country stakeholder engagement, leveraged past learnings, and refined implementation models – each with its own strengths and limitations. However, some challenges remain. These include misaligned implementation timelines, gaps in monitoring progress, and the need for stronger coordination structures to align humanitarian and development responses with government priorities. Balancing the needs of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities also remains a key challenge, particularly in environments where financial resources are scarce.

Ensuring sustainable refugee integration requires early government engagement, locally led approaches, and a stronger emphasis on peacebuilding. Enhancing AAP, integrating conflict sensitivity more effectively, and addressing environmental considerations could improve future responses to forced displacement.

Interest area 1: Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities in partnership set-up and project design

Leveraging and capitalising on the comparative advantage of partners

BMZ/GIZ provided critical funding and technical expertise to complement UNHCR's efforts under SUN-GP to support the inclusion of refugees in national planning for increased self-reliance and resilience. Both organisations brought high levels of trust and close government relationships to the partnership, enabling effective coordination with ministries and development partners, and alignment with broader national planning and budgeting frameworks. There are examples from various country contexts of GIZ and UNHCR effectively leveraging their respective technical expertise, presence, resources, and networks to implement nexus approaches. For example, in Uganda GIZ supports the strengthening of authorities' local district planning by contributing to medium-term (five-year) planning processes. In Mauritania, UNHCR's preparedness expertise supports the authorities in adopting a comprehensive approach that combines development initiatives with emergency response, which is especially critical for addressing surges in new refugee arrivals.

The partnership provided both GIZ and UNHCR with opportunities to learn how to refine roles and improve communication by building on mechanisms that worked. These opportunities were facilitated by information-sharing meetings, technical exchanges, and informal communication that supported real-time problem-solving. In Mexico, a coordination agreement clarified cooperation terms and improved workflow, while in Mauritania, efficiencies were achieved by hiring dedicated project managers.

Reflection on different implementation models

This study identifies the strengths and weaknesses of SUN-GP's different implementation modalities: transactional, non-transactional, and joint implementation.¹ All modalities can be effective in achieving a balanced, multi-faceted response to displacement. A few factors are important across all three modalities for enabling effective partnerships: the alignment of implementation timeframes, the establishment of effective coordination and communication mechanisms from the outset (project inception), dedicated expectation management, trust-building, and alignment of interventions with the partners' respective technical expertise and networks. While the joint implementation modality has the potential to offer deeper partnership integration – for example when organisations work together on a day-to-day basis, sharing the same project geographies, offices, and staff – it does not inherently lead to greater success than other modalities. In addition, the benefits of this modality are more likely to be seen in the medium- to long-term as they relate to the sustainability of impact and capacity built within local ecosystems; it may not be realistic to expect immediate cost savings or efficiencies.

In terms of additional opportunities, this joint study's findings suggest that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices within programmes using HDP nexus approaches should be strengthened – this is true across all of the implementation modalities covered in this study. GIZ and UNHCR acknowledge the importance of measuring impacts on resilience and socio-economic inclusion of affected populations through the application of HDP nexus approaches. However, monitoring systems do not currently capture direct benefits for targeted populations, and measuring the impact on affected populations remained outside the scope of the joint study.

¹ Non-transactional implementation – GIZ and UNHCR work in partnership leveraging complementary expertise, but no financial resources are exchanged; UNHCR-led transactional implementation – UNHCR leads implementation of SUN-GP activities supported by BMZ funding; Joint Implementation – GIZ and UNHCR jointly implement SUN-GP activities, supported by BMZ funding to both organisations.

Interest area 2: Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities on HDP approaches for GCR implementation

Contributing to collective outcomes

Ideally, government-led planning frameworks for inclusion and solutions to displacement should reflect collective outcomes for different actors to align their interventions. SUN-GP demonstrated strong alignment with national planning frameworks, ensuring that interventions contributed to broader government-led strategies. Across the case study countries, interventions were designed to support national resilience-building efforts, infrastructure rehabilitation, and refugee inclusion in national services and economies. Early government engagement by humanitarian and development partners and joint strategy development at both national and local levels enhanced political ownership and contributed to the strong alignment between partners. In Ethiopia, by involving local actors and placing staff in key regions, GIZ and UNHCR were able to adapt projects and tailor solutions to resonate with specific community dynamics. In Uganda, SUN-GP supported National Development Plans and sector response plans that capitalised on the host government's administrative structures and policy-making capabilities for refugee inclusion.

Other success factors for operationalising the HDP nexus included clear national-level coordination structures, locally led coordination and the application of bottom-up approaches.

- › **National coordination structures:** This joint study identified good practices for whole-of-government approaches to the refugee response, which include using cross-sectoral coordination and leveraging existing structures such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). Examples of these good practices were seen in Uganda and Ethiopia. SUN-GP supported this approach with GCR Advisors. Challenges in other case study countries included insufficient political buy-in for national planning frameworks and weak mandates of lead agencies within national coordination structures.
- › **Locally led coordination and bottom-up approaches:** To implement bottom-up approaches, humanitarian and development actors need to achieve a common understanding with local actors, secure political buy-in, foster a sense of ownership at the local level, and strengthen participation within communities. Capacity-strengthening efforts with local governments in Uganda, income creation for municipalities through land development in Niger, and joint implementation of gender-based violence (GBV) services with local governments in Mozambique all serve as positive examples of this. However, the partnership faced challenges in fully engaging local actors in some contexts such as in Ethiopia. This was due, in part, to centralised decision-making structures, a lack of implementation mechanisms, and limited funding at the district level.

To fully operationalise HDP nexus approaches, contributions to peace outcomes require greater attention and investment. While “small p” contributions, such as conflict-sensitive programming and capacity-building, were evident in some contexts, peace outcomes were not consistently prioritised. Differences in organisational mandates and language around peace-related work contributed to a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities.

Further opportunities to contribute to the operationalisation of the GCR

Designing a partnership to complement other actors' efforts was a key success factor for HDP interventions to advance GCR objectives. In both Mauritania and Niger, cooperation between GIZ and UNHCR complemented major investments by the World Bank in national development planning. Conversely, in other contexts, SUN-GP missed opportunities to leverage synergies between HDP interventions with other actors.

Cross-cutting environmental issues offer an opportunity for bringing humanitarian, development and peace actors together to achieve GCR objectives. While environmental issues were part of SUN-GP in some settings (Energy Solutions in Displacement Settings – ESDS), there is potential to more systematically address environmental issues, including climate resilience.

Integration of AAP and conflict sensitivity as cross-cutting issues

The partnership has produced good practice on conflict sensitivity and social cohesion, but there are additional opportunities for strengthening AAP and making these areas more systematic.

- › **Accountability to Affected People:** UNHCR and GIZ employed basic AAP tools and supported the strengthening of local actors' capacity in this respect. Areas requiring attention include: i) moving beyond one-way feedback by communicating whether and how feedback is taken onboard; ii) checking for the inclusion of a broad range of perspectives; and iii) developing a clear approach for collecting, analysing, and using information on community participation and AAP across partner agencies.
- › **Conflict-sensitivity:** The study also identified promising practices used in SUN-GP for applying conflict-sensitive approaches. Ethiopia's community-based conflict management is a positive example of the application of conflict-sensitive approaches under SUN-GP. Similarly, Mauritania's ProNexus project balanced immediate humanitarian needs with sustainable strategies while addressing communal conflicts through awareness-raising and social inclusion efforts. Moving forward, greater collaboration will be needed to ensure partner agencies integrate conflict-sensitive programming effectively, including aligning reporting on conflict-sensitive indicators.
- › **Social cohesion:** Well-implemented, culturally aware interventions can positively impact social cohesion when aligned with community needs. Positive examples emerged across different contexts, including the integration of women into brickyard workforce initiatives, which led to reduced GBV reports in Niger, Peace Circles that fostered social cohesion and trust among communities in Mexico, and One Stop Shops that centralised protection services for both refugees and host populations in various countries. However, resource scarcity often created competing priorities, requiring careful negotiation to prevent tensions between displaced populations and host communities. Funding constraints sometimes led to perceived inequities in aid distribution, undermining social cohesion. Furthermore, government-led integration efforts sometimes overlooked grassroots discrimination issues.

Recommendations

Table 1 below outlines the eleven recommendation areas identified by the joint study and their rationale. The full text of the recommendations is included at the end of the joint study report.

Recommendation area	Rationale
Recommendation 1 Build in flexibility to support partnering processes and dynamics	The identification and regular assessment of partners' comparative advantages and disadvantages in sectors of intervention and contexts of focus are necessary to support the achievement of results.
Recommendation 2 Set up light structures to support partnering and implementation of joint initiatives	Working in partnership across the HDP nexus requires dedicated structures to support relevant processes, particularly given differences in organisational tools and working cultures and potential needs for adaptation over the course of implementation.
Recommendation 3 Share learning to support effective partnering efforts	Thanks to their collaboration on SUN-GP, UNHCR and GIZ have both undergone learning processes that will likely be useful for both organisations in future partnerships with one another as well as with other stakeholders. Learnings should be captured in documentation such as SOPs, recommendations compendiums and/or a collection of good practices and reflections.
Recommendation 4 Improve the process and utility of joint project monitoring and learning cycles	To address the persistence of differences in assessing what constitutes progress on the application of HDP nexus approaches, a more coherent understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of HDP interventions in displacement settings is needed to support inclusion and long-term outcomes.
Recommendation 5 Foster a whole-of-government approach to ensure alignment and sustainability	A unified, whole-of-government approach aligned with international partners is key to the sustainability of solutions in forced displacement contexts.
Recommendation 6 Ensure vision and operational planning support implementation of inclusion efforts	The achievement of concrete lasting outcomes for populations affected by displacement must include efforts to support the inclusion of displaced populations in national services and improve their livelihood opportunities. This will help facilitate the transition to self-reliance and limit aid dependency.
Recommendation 7 Capitalise on partners' comparative advantages through systems-based context analyses	The identification of priority sectors where humanitarian and development actors can support the inclusion of displaced populations should be based on a detailed context analysis that allows them to strategically formulate their offer and identify areas that may require adaptations, including in addressing issues such as lack of political will, lack of access, or limited influence to effect change.
Recommendation 8 Build and strengthen capacity on sectoral and cross-cutting issues	The positioning of humanitarian and development actors supporting HDP nexus approaches in displacement settings must be based on an assessment of national capacity and sectoral entry points to support national ownership and transition planning.
Recommendation 9 Support bottom-up responses and engage with local actors	In line with localisation/locally led development commitments and fostering of bottom-up responses to displacement, the engagement of local actors should be prioritised and financial, technical and capacity support provided to them for sustainability and effectiveness.
Recommendation 10 Systematically collect and use beneficiary perspectives	Meaningful engagement with SUN-GP beneficiaries promotes interventions that are more relevant to their needs and project designs, delivery, and adaptations that more effectively integrate their perspectives and views.
Recommendation 11 Systematically collect and use data on interventions' impact on social cohesion	The concept of social cohesion in HDP nexus programming should be further developed. Given both uncertainty around putting the "peace" element of the nexus into practice and the narrow understanding of social cohesion (which is limited to including both refugees and host community members in HDP interventions), HDP partners should further develop their definition of social cohesion entails and use that to inform more appropriate guidance.

Table 1. Joint study recommendation areas

Introduction

Context

By mid-2024, 122.6 million people remained forcibly displaced because of conflict, violence, persecution, and human rights violations.² UNHCR is responding to 28 active displacement situations across 173 countries including Afghanistan, Sudan, and Ukraine.³ Meanwhile prevalent policy perspectives on how to best respond to forced displacement have significantly evolved. Amid the connectedness of humanitarian needs, development, insecurity and fragility, there is a growing consensus that responses should link these issues and involve relevant actors working on them. Under the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach, these actors work in complementarity and cooperate to reduce dependency on aid by strengthening national and/or local services and creating socio-economic opportunities for refugees and host communities.

Government and international actors' commitment to apply the HDP nexus approach has gained significant traction since 2016 when UN agencies and governments agreed to a New Way of Working,⁴ whereby humanitarian, development and peace actors would work on **collective outcomes** (see dedicated section on this concept below). In 2018, in recognition of the need for more integrated responses to forced displacement, the United Nations adopted the **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)**. The GCR emphasises social and economic inclusion of refugees through strengthened local leadership and a central contribution of development and peace actors to complement initial emergency support to refugee responses.

The GCR strongly encourages the adoption of **HDP nexus approaches** to respond to situations of forced displacement. The HDP nexus, in turn, seeks to capture two phenomena. First, the nexus captures **linkages** between humanitarian needs, development, and peace interventions. These connections revolve around shared drivers, such as the recognition that events that cause humanitarian needs will also affect development, and that mutual dependencies such as stability and peace create conditions for both addressing humanitarian needs and for making progress on development outcomes. Second, the HDP nexus is an approach, whereby humanitarian, development and peace actors work together to achieve common objectives. Since the commitment to the New Way of Working in 2016 and the GCR in 2018, progress has been made. The practices of UN agencies, development actors and many host governments and national development agencies have changed in recognition of the development dimension of acute or protracted displacement. There are documented examples of HDP nexus coordination, programming, and well-developed theories of change in refugee and forced displacement settings.⁵

² UNHCR, Data and Statistics – Mid-Year Trends (accessed: 2 February 2025).

³ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal – *Situations* (accessed: 14 January 2025).

⁴ United Nations, The New Way of Working, <https://www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working> (accessed 13 January 2025).

⁵ ALNAP. 2023. *The humanitarian-development-peace nexus: current status and discourse*.

However, increasing needs⁶ and shrinking budgets for humanitarian aid, development assistance, and peace action also put efforts under strain. At the time of commissioning SUN-GP (see below) there was limited evidence on the experiences of operationalising the HDP nexus. A recent meta-evaluation on working across the HDP nexus points to numerous challenges in putting the approach into practice. There are fundamentally different understandings of the breadth of change required for HDP nexus approaches to work, resulting in variations in how it is applied; there is insufficient operational guidance on applying the approach and measuring progress; the consideration of peace often remains unclear, with conflict and gender analyses largely absent or conducted in siloes by different actors; local actors are not meaningfully participating in planning; private sector collaboration remains low; climate risks are seldom addressed; and funding constraints hinder integrated efforts.⁷

The SUN Global Programme

Since 2018, the *Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)*, the *Deutsch Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH*⁸, and the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)* have worked together to implement the joint UNHCR-GIZ Global Programme Support to UNHCR in *Facilitating the Operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, also referred to as SUN Global Programme or SUN-GP.⁹ Funding for SUN-GP totalled EUR 80 million. Figure 1 illustrates the SUN-GP's focus areas and intended outputs.¹⁰

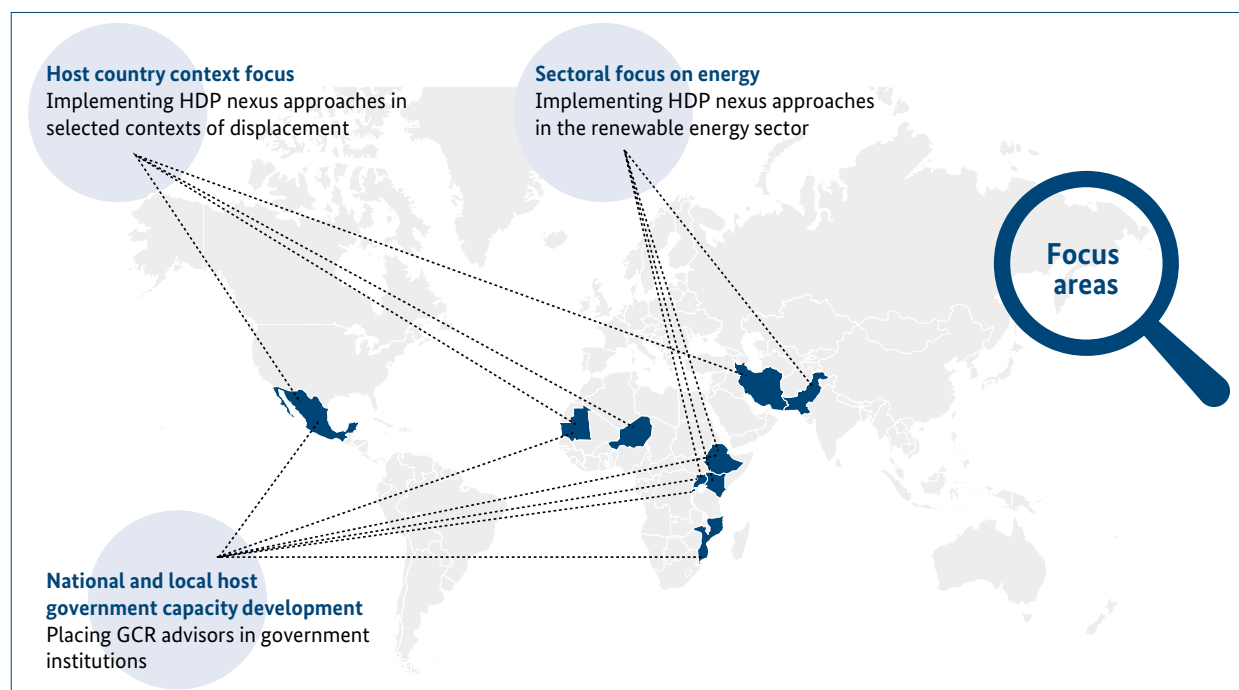


Figure 1. SUN-GP focus areas and intended outputs¹¹

⁶ See the OCHA's 2023 *Global Humanitarian Overview*, pointing to a 25 percent increase in needs from previous years

⁷ Morinière, L. and S. Morrison-Métis. 2023. *Working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: What can we learn from evaluations?* London: ODI/ALNAP

⁸ As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development

⁹ While the title of the SUN Global Programme relates to the Global Compact on Refugees, the cooperation has in practice evolved to look at IDPs in certain aspects, including in Mozambique, Niger, and Mexico.

¹⁰ Focus areas are formally known in SUN-GP documentation as fields of action.

¹¹ Focus area C on UNHCR staff capacity to cooperate with development actors was outside the scope of this joint study and is not examined in this report.

SUN-GP aimed to enhance the socio-economic integration and self-reliance of refugees and host communities by aligning humanitarian assistance with development and peacebuilding efforts. It did so by following four fields of action that had different substantive focus areas and implementation modalities:

- › A first field of action on implementing the HDP nexus in selected contexts of displacement, namely Niger, Mauritania, Mexico and Mozambique.
- › A second field of action on implementing the HDP nexus in the renewable energy sector, in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Pakistan.
- › A third, global component on capacity development of UNHCR to strengthen skills and competences of UNHCR staff on country, regional, and HQ level.
- › A fourth field of action on capacity development of (national and local level) host government structures through the specific modality of GCR advisors in Uganda, Rwanda, Mauritania, Mexico, Ethiopia, Somalia.

The joint study on the partnership between UNHCR and German Development Cooperation

The joint study was conducted between February 2022 and March 2025 by IOD PARC in partnership with the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) with a focus on SUN-GP to address the overarching question of **‘How can HDP nexus approaches be used to better respond to forced displacement and put into practice the objectives of the GCR?’**¹² To examine this question, the joint study focused on identifying lessons, gaps and opportunities along two main interest areas: **partnership set-up, design, and leverage of comparative advantage, and HDP approaches for implementation of the GCR**. Table 2 below illustrates the sub-questions under each interest area, refined during the drafting of this report,¹³ as well as a forward-looking question on implications and recommendations.

Interest area	Joint study questions
Lessons Learnt, Gaps and Opportunities in Partnership Set-up and Project Design	<p>How does cooperation under SUN-GP leverage and capitalize on the comparative advantages of the involved partners, in particular the host government, BMZ/GIZ, and UNHCR? How do emerging/new cooperation relationships under SUN-GP draw on learning from earlier partnering experiences?</p> <p>What are the benefits of applying a joint implementation model on time (e.g., time and resources, co-location)? How does the degree of jointness impact on results and/or sustainability?</p> <p>What are contextual and partnership enabling and constraining factors for the implementation of HDP approaches?</p>
Lessons Learnt, Gaps and Opportunities on HDP Approaches for GCR Implementation	<p>What are the priorities for GCR implementation in the respective case countries, and how are these reflected in collective outcomes and synergies of the UNHCR-German Development Cooperation partnership? How are national actors engaged with collective outcomes?¹⁴</p> <p>What are the areas in which the UNHCR-German Development Cooperation partnership is perceived to have contributed most to collective outcomes (and how)? How have wider partnerships with national host governments contributed?</p> <p>What are the remaining opportunities for the UNHCR-German Development Cooperation partnership’s contribution through SUN-GP to GCR implementation (e.g., in terms of ways of working and setting organising principles)?</p> <p>How have partnership interventions at country level integrated Accountability to Affected People considerations including conflict sensitivity in design and implementation?</p>
Moving Forward	<p>Implications and recommendations: Going forward, how can cooperation between humanitarian and development actors best contribute toward implementing the GCR? What would be necessary changes to that end?</p>

Table 2. Joint study interest areas and sub-questions

¹² To ease pressure on host countries; to enhance refugee self-reliance; to expand access to third country solutions; and to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

¹³ Refinements include: addressing lessons, gaps and opportunities in both interest areas as an overarching theme; changing the order of questions under the partnership interest area to improve narrative flow of the report; and placing questions on AAP and conflict sensitivity under HDP approaches, and on context and partnership enabling and constraining factors under partnership lessons.

¹⁴ In practical terms, collective outcomes can be described as “the deliverables that development and humanitarian actors (as well as other relevant actors) would like to achieve at the end of a three to five-year period”. The process of developing collective outcomes includes a joint analysis of the country/regional context; defining strategic priority areas for vulnerability reduction and linking these to national strategies and priorities; identifying realistic, tangible and measurable goals in line with the identified priorities and capacity and mandate of each partner; developing joint workplans and projects to support the achievement of the identified collective outcomes; and coordinating resource mobilisation for the collective outcomes, including predictable and diversified funding streams.

The methodology for the joint study was shaped by a Developmental Evaluation approach that allowed for mapping SUN-GP and its various contexts (**what?**), to deep-dive and analyse HDP approaches implemented in SUN-GP countries (**so what?**), and to synthesise and extract lessons learned on operationalising the GCR through these HDP approaches (**then what?**).

The findings presented in the report are based on document reviews; in-country data collection in Mexico, Mauritania, and Mozambique (field missions and remote follow-ups after one year); desk-based data collection for Niger, Ethiopia, and Uganda; and workshops conducted with UNHCR and GIZ staff both at HQ and country levels. The report also draws on several outputs that have been completed over the joint study's time-frame, including a literature review; three country reports for Mexico, Mauritania and Mozambique; desk reports on Niger, Ethiopia and Uganda; several presentations of emerging findings; and a series of webinars.

Data was analysed and triangulated using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software, and evidence was discussed in several team analysis sessions. Emerging findings and recommendations were validated with UNHCR and GIZ in studied countries and with SUN-GP teams at the HQ level. Annex 1 details the study's approach, methodology and outputs.

Structure of the synthesis report

This synthesis report summarises what can be learned from the partnership between German Development Cooperation and UNHCR to operationalise the HDP nexus in displacement settings, and experiences and lessons that are relevant for other actors working in this space. The report draws on the outputs of the joint study and covers each of the joint study's interest areas in turn, presenting findings on the partnership between German Development Cooperation and UNHCR first, followed by findings related to the operationalisation of the HDP nexus through SUN-GP. Both sections feed into a concluding section on implications of cooperation for applying HDP nexus approaches by working in partnership. The report offers recommendations tailored to different stakeholder groups of relevance to the operationalisation of the GCR through HDP approaches.

Synthesis of study findings

Interest area 1: Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities in partnership set-up and project design

This section presents lessons learnt, gaps and opportunities on the set-up of the partnership between UNHCR and German Development Cooperation, as well as the design of projects within the partnership. It addresses the study's questions on i) the comparative advantages of UNHCR and German Development Cooperation; ii) choice of implementation models; and iii) enabling and constraining factors.

Leveraging and capitalising on partners' comparative advantages

Under SUN-GP, BMZ/GIZ have provided critical funding and shared technical expertise to complement UNHCR's efforts to foster sustainable, long-term planning and the inclusion of refugee support within development frameworks, national services and economies.

Longer-term funding from BMZ directly supported UNHCR's ongoing efforts to promote a transition from parallel humanitarian delivery to inclusion in national systems, and government-led measures that foster self-reliance and resilience.

GIZ's expertise, presence and networks in implementing countries allowed it to strengthen capacity of government actors and to enhance project effectiveness. For example, in Mauritania's ProNexus project, GIZ provided on-the-ground technical support through the secondment of a GCR Advisor to the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation (MIDEC). This role was instrumental in supporting the revision of legal frameworks, and in embedding refugee-related policies across government line ministries. By providing expertise directly within the government, GIZ enables capacity strengthening that reinforces local institutional structures, promoting better alignment between refugee policies and broader development goals. In Uganda, using its strong connection and communication from the district level up to Kampala, GIZ supported local district planning by enhancing understanding of the HDP nexus and contributing to the medium-term (five-year) planning process. By guiding planning activities and budget forecasts alongside UNHCR, GIZ strengthened the link between shorter-term humanitarian objectives and longer-term development goals.

Cooperation under SUN-GP also effectively leveraged UNHCR's comparative advantage by making use of its expertise in protection, multi-sectoral humanitarian response, and solutions in displacement settings. In Mauritania, UNHCR's preparedness expertise was instrumental in shaping an overall approach that combined development initiatives with flexible emergency responses. For example, UNHCR supported the National Civil Registration Agency (ANRPTS), managing to improve accurate and efficient refugee registration capabilities.

UNHCR's extensive operational experience also enabled it to support the design and implementation of other related projects and programmes such as a GIZ, BMZ- and EU-funded programme *Increased Demand on Government Service and Creation of Economic Opportunities* in Uganda. Inputs from UNHCR helped ensure that refugee needs were accurately reflected and addressed, and they shaped programmatic efforts that are sensitive to the unique challenges faced by refugees. In Mauritania, the partnership between UNHCR and the World Bank ensured that the specific needs of refugees are met within the frameworks of broader development programmes, reinforcing the stability and resilience of host communities alongside refugee populations. A further example is UNHCR's role in mainstreaming protection-sensitive approaches within government agencies. By advocating for the rights and needs of refugees, UNHCR ensures that protection concerns are incorporated in broader development policies and practices, thereby promoting a holistic approach that considers the vulnerabilities of refugees as part of national development efforts.

Key finding 2

The partnership model under SUN-GP fostered stronger connections with in-country stakeholders by utilising the established trust and networks of both agencies.

UNHCR and GIZ brought high levels of trust and existing close government relationships, which facilitated effective coordination with ministries and development partners, and alignment with broader national planning and budgeting frameworks. The broadening of the stakeholder network of each organisation through the partnership promoted stronger relationships between staff, as well as with government officials and other partners, as was for example observed in Uganda and in Mauritania. Going forward, by leveraging their existing networks and diverse areas of coverage, UNHCR and GIZ can build on existing investments and create alignment between ongoing projects, maximising resource use and fostering a collaborative ecosystem.

SUN-GP learning from earlier partnering experiences

The partnership under SUN-GP has drawn on learnings from previous experiences, both between GIZ and UNHCR, and with other actors. This learning involves refining roles, enhancing communication, and strategically aligning efforts to maximise impact for refugees and host communities.

One of the key challenges in the partnership between GIZ and UNHCR related to finding effective communication mechanisms between different levels (HQ, country, field) of GIZ and UNHCR, in part due to the different structures and ways of working of humanitarian and development actors. To overcome this challenge, under SUN-GP both organisations have taken active measures to improve communication. In Mozambique, for example, staff reportedly demonstrated a greater willingness for collaboration and information sharing over time through regular meetings, technical exchanges, and quarterly monitoring calls. These exchanges build on previous experiences of misalignment and aim to ensure that both organisations can effectively share expertise and information in a timely manner. In addition to formal mechanisms, the study found informal communication to be equally important to support real-time information exchange and problem-solving.

Learning has also taken place in relation to understanding different ways of working and ensuring role clarity. In Mexico, country staff pointed to early tensions regarding the roles of humanitarian and development partners. To achieve clearer cooperation terms, a coordination agreement was put in place to define cooperation levels and facilitate discussions on more productive ways of working. In Mauritania and Mozambique, the hiring of full-time project managers for SUN-GP projects exemplifies how dedicated project roles can mitigate coordination challenges and increase efficiencies.

Another area of learning related to the engagement with other actors in the nexus space. In Mozambique, as GIZ and UNHCR prepare for the second phase of Nexus Norte, discussions are focused on strengthening coordination through national and province government agencies designated to respond to forced displacement. Focusing on these institutions as key coordinating bodies builds on past insights about effective governance and the need for a local agency to lead coordination efforts, which was not fully realised in earlier phases. Similarly, in Mauritania, the acknowledgment of delays in the implementation of International Development Association (IDA) programmes has informed current planning and coordination efforts with the World Bank on protection, policy, and data analysis to enhance service delivery for both refugees and host communities, encouraging more proactive strategies to address potential obstacles.

Reflection on different implementation models

Level of jointness

Key finding 4

Each of the transaction, non-transactional and joint implementation modalities under SUN-GP offers strengths and weaknesses. Despite offering a higher degree of partnership integration, the joint implementation modality does not guarantee greater degrees of success compared with the transactional and non-transactional modalities.

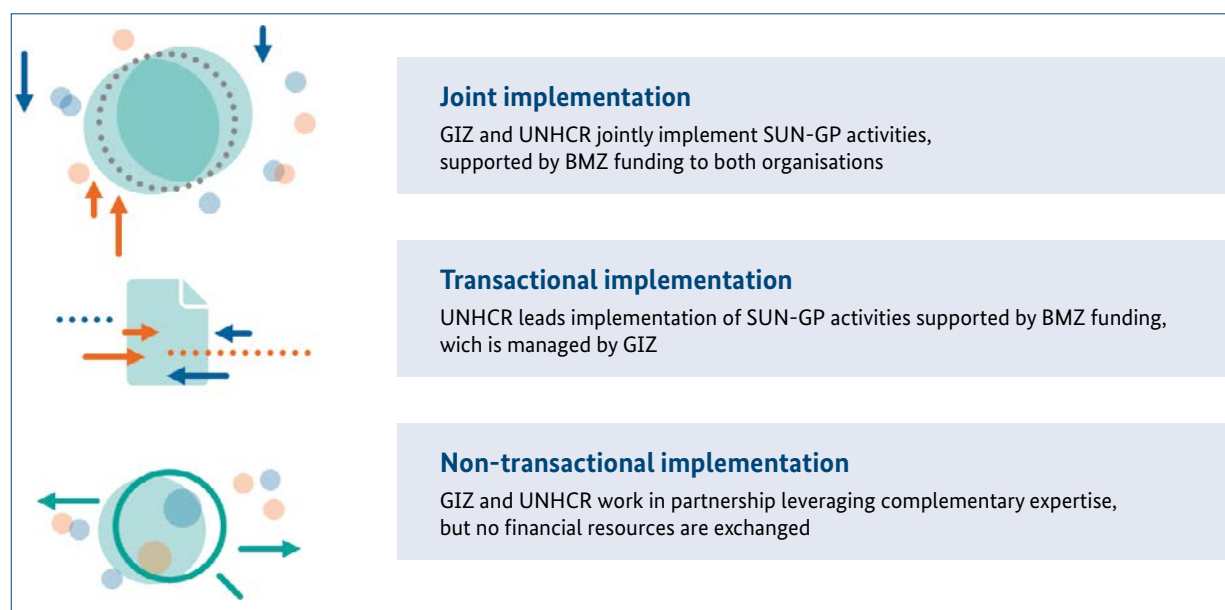


Figure 2. Modality definitions

The study has identified elements that have facilitated collaborative working across implementation models. These elements include the establishment of a foundation of trust and shared understanding between the two partners, the importance of clear communication and of setting expectations for the partnership from the outset and ensuring that the focus of interventions effectively draws on the comparative advantages of partners – both in terms of sectoral/technical focus and leveraging of networks.

In Uganda and Mauritania, which are non-transactional and joint implementation contexts, respectively, high levels of alignment with national initiatives and broader efforts at different governance levels fostered local ownership and integration of services into national systems, allowing continued support even as external involvement decreases. In these contexts, the focus of implementation aligned with the national policy context and relevant interventions by other actors, resulting in better delivery of services and more cohesive support for displaced and host communities. In Mauritania's ProNexus project, GIZ's established local relationships complement UNHCR's focus on refugee protection, facilitating a smoother transfer of services to local authorities and reducing long-term dependency on international actors. In Uganda, the work conducted by GIZ and UNHCR led to well-integrated initiatives like solarised health centres and energy kiosks, which improved health and economic outcomes for both refugees and host communities. This example illustrates that the choice of focus in terms of intervention and sector for each partner are crucial considerations in effective partnering.

However, where implementation is more challenging, as was seen in the Mexico case study, effectiveness may be limited or delayed, with less efficient use of resources and missed opportunities for integrated solutions that benefit all stakeholders from the outset. The restriction of GIZ's operations to the central states, excluding southern states, created a perception that sustainable development was prioritised in areas where both partners were active. This set-up left critical needs unaddressed in the south, missing an opportunity to support host communities' development and peacebuilding efforts in those areas under a joint implementation modality.

The joint implementation modality does offer potential for deeper partnership integration, for example when organisations work together on a day-to-day basis, sharing the same project geographies, offices, and staff, it does not inherently lead to greater success than other modalities. In addition, it may not be realistic to expect immediate cost savings or efficiencies as benefits are more likely to be seen in terms of medium- to long-term sustainability of impact and capacity building of local ecosystems.

Division of responsibilities and factors impacting on results and sustainability

Key finding 5

The division of responsibilities under SUN-GP has shown efficiencies in achieving a balanced, multi-faceted response to complex challenges around displacement.

The partnership between GIZ and UNHCR has enabled partners to draw on complementary skills and capacity to operate at the local, national, and international level in line with HDP approaches. The division of project responsibilities between UNHCR and GIZ, based on each organisation's strengths, is designed to ensure that each partner can focus on what they do best. UNHCR mainly handles protection and integration based on its expertise in refugee contexts, while GIZ leads on technical development aspects. For example, ProNexus in Mauritania divided project responsibilities between the two organisations, assigning six areas to UNHCR, five to GIZ, and one joint area focused on protection and integration policies. In Mexico, the collaboration featured the division of project responsibilities along regional lines: UNHCR concentrated on humanitarian efforts along the southern border, while GIZ focused on development programming in the central states to leverage each agency's strengths within their respective geographic areas of operation. This structured approach also helped streamline operations and prevent duplication. The division of project responsibilities, however, also has disadvantages such as the creation of siloes, which is discussed later in the report.

By combining UNHCR's humanitarian, protection and solutions focus with GIZ's development expertise, the partnership model has potential to address both immediate and long-term needs of refugees and host communities. In Uganda, for instance, UNHCR's protection work aligns well with GIZ's efforts to boost economic resilience, fostering a more holistic response that addresses both protection and livelihood opportunities. In Niger, UNHCR's local knowledge in the security-sensitive Tillabery region allowed it to manage interventions that development agencies alone might find challenging. Nonetheless, and for the Niger example in particular, the differences between humanitarian and development standards proved challenging to reconcile in relation to building standards, for example, and in this respect illustrates the importance of ensuring shared understanding of expectations for implementation of HDP approaches and interventions more generally.

Key finding 6

In contexts where GIZ and UNHCR began implementation at different times, misaligned implementation timelines negatively affected collaboration and sustained results for joint activities.

In Mozambique, UNHCR's early start in implementation led to a perception of "business as usual" among its field staff, with less integration of GIZ's development-focused activities, and lack of external stakeholder awareness of the partnership. In addition, staggered recruitment slowed joint ownership and trust-building between teams, diminishing the alignment necessary for cohesive programming. These factors highlighted the importance of coordinated timelines to enhance efficiency and maximise the outcomes of joint implementation.

There is room to improve how progress in achieving results for affected populations is measured, and there are additional opportunities to strengthen monitoring approaches under all implementation models reviewed in the joint study.

Both GIZ and UNHCR recognise the importance of measuring progress on applying HDP approaches, which has been emphasised by their experience of working in partnership. Through their cooperation, they have evolved in their understanding about their roles and contributions to HDP nexus approaches, and both organisations have invested in assessing past progress. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear how this recognition and learning from past assessments have influenced monitoring practices. Several global-level evaluations¹⁵ and this joint study provide evidence on the types and degree of cooperation and contribution to outcomes. There are also examples of the positive effects of cooperation for affected populations.¹⁶ However, evidence on the effects of nexus approaches on affected populations remain sparse. Going forward, there are opportunities for the two organisations to further align their monitoring practices and strengthen the use of monitoring data to better capture the effects of HDP nexus approaches on affected populations.

The joint study team proposed six proposed steps to strengthen the integration of monitoring and learning processes into project design and implementation modalities (illustrated in Figure 3 below and detailed in Annex 3). The diagram draws on evidence of areas that were strengthened over time in GIZ and UNHCR’s partnership as well as gaps identified.¹⁷

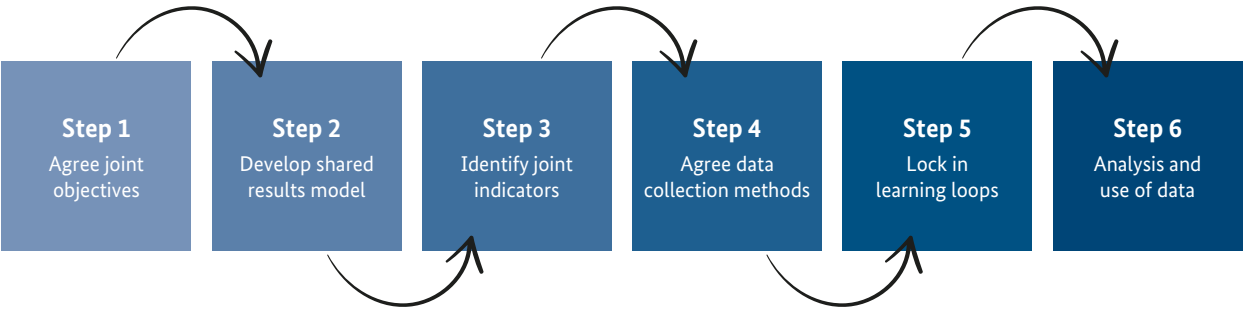


Figure 3. Steps for developing the monitoring and learning framework

¹⁵ For example, see UNHCR. 2023. *UNHCR’s Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation Post2021: How to Stay the Course*.
¹⁶ We note that the SUN GP evaluation was conducted in 2024.
¹⁷ This diagram is also linked to recommendation 6.

Interest area 2: Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities on HDP approaches for GCR implementation

This section presents lessons learnt, gaps and opportunities of HDP approaches for GCR implementation. It focuses on the study's questions on i) setting collective outcomes; ii) additional opportunities to contribute to them; and iii) integration of Accountability to Affected People (AAP) and conflict sensitivity as cross-cutting issues.

Contributing to collective outcomes

Collective outcomes – that is, “jointly envisioned result(s) with the aim of addressing and reducing needs, risks, and vulnerabilities”¹⁸ – are a cornerstone of HDP nexus approaches. Ideally, they should be reflected in government-led planning frameworks for humanitarian, development, peace and other relevant actors to align their interventions to, based on joint analysis. Collective outcomes are also meant to concretise high-level political commitments, such as those made at the Global Refugee Forum. The partnership between German Development Cooperation and UNHCR offers a wealth of contextual learning on contributing to collective outcomes, given not only multi-year collaboration between a humanitarian actor, a development actor and national, regional and local governments, but also the diversity of displacement contexts in which SUN-GP was implemented. Across these contexts, SUN-GP aimed to contribute towards national Global Refugee Forum pledges and to local and national development plans.

Key finding 8

Forced displacement responses should align with the needs and priorities of host governments who hold ultimate responsibility in shifting from short-term humanitarian response to long-term planning for refugee inclusion. This alignment facilitates the identification of clear entry points and concrete contributions that humanitarian and development actors can make to operationalise the HDP nexus.

While there is a strong international policy agenda on the HDP nexus, as detailed in the introduction, responses in displacement contexts often remain fragmented. Constraints to more joined-up efforts stem from differences in the mandates, priorities and ways of working of stakeholders involved in operationalising the HDP nexus, and ongoing challenges in forging common understandings around conceptual issues, including on the HDP nexus itself (see Interest Area 1 for more details).

¹⁸ Interagency Standing Committee. 2020. *Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes*, p2.

The partnership between GIZ and UNHCR highlights the importance of identifying concrete entry points for supporting national and multilateral planning frameworks and policies at the country level. Alignment with collective outcomes under these planning frameworks and policies has generally been a strength in the country-level partnership of GIZ and UNHCR across all case countries examined. For example, at the country-level, the focus of SUN-GP projects reflects national planning framework objectives in areas affected by conflict, such as building resilience and rebuilding infrastructure. In the Tillabery region of Niger, SUN-GP supported national and regional policy and plans to transition the refugee population out of camps through the development of land parcels for social housing, along with income-generating opportunities in construction, and improved protection and assistance services. Similarly in northern Mozambique, UNHCR and GIZ cooperation contributes to the government's out-of-camp policy through the transition of the Maratane refugee camp. These efforts align with both national collective outcomes and the Government of Mozambique's Global Refugee Forum pledges.

In Mexico, UNHCR and GIZ supported the implementation of the government's policy on refugee inclusion by seeking to enhance access to legal assistance and protection services; promoting the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in local labour markets; and enhancing operational capacities and coordination of local authorities. Federal, state, and municipal government actors are strongly engaged, facilitating access to public services and promoting social integration for refugees and asylum seekers, which maximises the government's role and resources. In Mauritania, one objective of the partnership has been to improve access to social protection, in line with ongoing national efforts to strengthen the social registry of the country and to provide vulnerable populations with direct social support, regardless of their status.

Key finding 9

Early government engagement by humanitarian and development partners and joint strategy development at both national and local levels is important for enhancing political ownership and alignment with national priorities.

Involvement of, and joint policy development with, the government led to significant national-level endorsement, helping embed refugee-focused interventions within broader national goals. In Ethiopia, SUN-GP benefited from the local government's presence and influence across different regions. By involving local actors and placing staff in key regions, GIZ and UNHCR were able to adapt projects and tailor solutions that resonate with specific community dynamics. In both Ethiopia and Uganda, SUN-GP also supported the development and implementation of government strategies: Ethiopia's joint cooking fuel energy strategy aligns with national energy policies; and Uganda's work on National Development Plans and sector response plans capitalise on the host government's administrative structures and policy-making capabilities.

Clear coordination structures are essential in managing comprehensive responses to displacement that leverage nexus approaches. Humanitarian and development actors can support efforts to put in place coordination structures to implement overarching planning frameworks, which in turn can lead to more efficient resource allocation and better outcomes for affected displaced populations.

The study identified instances where cross-sectoral coordination structures were set up to operationalise a whole-of-government approach to refugee response.¹⁹ In countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia, which are Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) pilot countries, SUN-GP capitalised on existing coordination structures for implementation. In Uganda, GIZ and UNHCR actively support cross-sectoral efforts under the National Development Plan 3 (NDP3) through their roles in the CRRF Secretariat and Steering Group, which coordinate with government bodies and other partners to integrate refugee needs into national and district-level planning. In other contexts, the UNHCR and GIZ partnership took on a practical role in strengthening coordination mechanisms themselves. A highly successful example is the GCR Advisor model. The support provided by the GCR Advisor was tailored according to the needs of each host government, in some contexts supporting government actors in their coordination role and in others taking on a capacity strengthening role.

However, beyond these positive examples, the study has also identified instances where coordination structures are inadequate and support from international development actors for a strong government lead is necessary. Challenges identified in relation to coordination structures included varied levels of political buy-in for national planning frameworks, and weaknesses in the mandate of lead agencies within the overarching national coordination structures, which detracted from their effectiveness.

¹⁹ In the *Global Compact on Refugees in Emergencies*, a whole-of-government approach is defined as one 'in which a central authority (e.g. the Prime Minister's Office) coordinates a comprehensive plan where each ministry (education, health, labour, infrastructure, etc.) has its own responsibilities and targets that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timebound), and at times, costed. This will allow non-state actors and donors alike to clearly identify areas of complementary support (this process is also known as the multi-stakeholder approach)' (UNHCR, 2024)

The success of HDP nexus approaches rests on humanitarian and development organisations prioritising support to locally led coordination.

Implementing national priorities at the local level requires locally led coordination across the HDP nexus. A positive example in this regard is found in Uganda, where GCR Advisors have helped strengthen the capacity of local government, which has in turn led to increased services for both refugees and host communities in the WASH sector and economic opportunities through the construction of community centres in refugee settlements under the GIZ-RISE project. In Niger, SUN-GP was locally led; it created an income source for municipalities through land development. In Mozambique, the joint project strengthened UNHCR's capacity for working with local government to directly implement gender-based violence (GBV) services in Nampula and Maratane, including support to local government coordination and strengthening advocacy in areas where local government responses are required.

However, despite these positive examples, responses at the local level remain predominantly siloed, sectoral, and centralised.²⁰ The coordination challenges for HDP nexus approaches that exist at the central level of governance are often also visible, or may even be more pronounced, at the district or local levels. These challenges include a plurality of (competing) actors, the absence of implementation mechanisms and/or incentives, and limited capacity and funding. These challenging factors have been observed in several SUN-GP countries such as in Ethiopia and Mozambique, even though both GIZ and UNHCR have had opportunities to support lead agencies in coordination at the municipal and field levels. In addition, GIZ presence is dictated by where projects are located, which is usually at central rather than local level, and there may therefore be a lead-in time for support from GIZ to be established at local level.

Key finding 12

Opportunities remain to create or support more bottom-up responses. To implement these bottom-up approaches, it is important that humanitarian and development actors achieve a common understanding with local actors, secure political buy-in, and foster a sense of ownership at the local level, as well as strengthened participation from communities.

The emphasis on humanitarian responses being built from the bottom-up is at the forefront of current discussions in the United Nation's humanitarian system. OCHA's "flagship initiative", a practice-focused initiative seeking to redesign humanitarian response, revolves around making humanitarian response more community-driven by building on the input and priorities of affected communities, involving local partners actively, and better integrating the capacity of local and municipal governments and locally led non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/civil society organisations (CSOs) into planning.²¹

²⁰ Konyndyk, J., P. Saez and R. Worden. 2020. *Inclusive Coordination: Building an Area-Based Humanitarian Coordination Model*. Center for Global Development Policy Paper 184, October 2020.

²¹ OCHA. 2023. *Flagship Initiative*.

Even though bottom-up approaches will differ depending on context, there are some important elements that can be incorporated in planning and implementation efforts. At the planning stage, these could include securing the involvement of local NGOs and field-level staff of national or international actors, involvement of local government, community-focused needs assessments, and involvement of the private sector. At the implementation stage, it is important to involve and/or rely on local actors, to invest in the capacity development of local actors, and to ensure participation of targeted communities.

The incorporation of bottom-up approaches is an area identified as requiring further strengthening under SUN-GP. For example, there was a need to more systematically involve field-level UNHCR and GIZ teams in programming design, strengthen the relatively scarce cooperation with local private sector entities, and allocate funding directly to local organisations. Nonetheless, the study identified some examples where SUN-GP did demonstrate potential to build on bottom-up approaches. These include:

Planning

- › In Niger, local stakeholders such as regional planning departments and municipal authorities played a central role in projects supported by UNHCR, alongside representatives from refugee and host communities and national authorities, thereby ensuring community and local government participation.

Implementation

- › Under the CRRF in Uganda, several community engagement mechanisms were set up, designed to facilitate two-way channels of communication between refugees in the settlements and policy makers in Kampala. These forums are timed to ensure the issues discussed can be raised at quarterly CRRF Steering Group meetings. These forums have received support from both UNHCR and GIZ, which are part of a taskforce responsible for preparing and organising meeting sessions, including consulting refugees in the various districts on different topics. In addition, GIZ has covered funding gaps for the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF). In Ethiopia, the partnership uses participatory approaches to engage communities through existing structures like Refugee Coordination Committees and local district governments. For instance, community feedback informed technical decisions on cookstoves design and alternative fuels, ensuring the products better suit users' needs and habits. These examples from Uganda and Ethiopia demonstrate community participation.
- › In Mexico, GIZ's partnership with the *Cooperativa de Fundaciones en Guadalajara* effectively built the Cooperativa's capacity to train and support other local NGOs and CSOs, while also introducing a migration and humanitarian perspective to organisations previously focused exclusively on development or peace initiatives. Cooperativa has since embedded this migration focus into its work with various donors and as a funder, integrating this lens across the projects it supports. This example showcases involvement and capacity development of local NGOs.

To fully operationalise a HDP nexus approach, contributions to peace outcomes need greater attention and investment to ensure the peace sphere is given similar weight to the more established humanitarian and development spheres.

Consistent with evidence on the application of HDP nexus approaches in other contexts and partnerships,²² there is an opportunity to better consider the peace element of the nexus and contribution to peace outcomes. “Small p” contributions – that is, building the capacity for peace in societies,²³ as well as ensuring that programming is conflict-sensitive – were visible in the partnership, but not consistently. UNHCR and GIZ’s different mandates and different organisational language regarding the peace dimension of the nexus meant that, at the conceptual level, there was some lack of clarity on the role of GIZ and UNHCR in contributing to peace outcomes under SUN-GP. In Mexico, to build a better understanding of terminology relevant to working in partnership on conflict sensitivity, UNHCR provided training on protection and GIZ provided training on Do No Harm for each other and for partners.

Nonetheless, social cohesion approaches were mainstreamed throughout SUN-GP activities, and there were positive examples of the partnership’s contribution to social cohesion. For example, Peace Circles were implemented since 2023 in Querétaro, Mexico as part of efforts to address gender stereotypes and support the integration of migrant and refugee populations. These Peace Circles, which received financial and capacity development support from the UNHCR-GIZ joint programme in Mexico, provided safe spaces for women and men to build connections, heal, and engage in honest dialogue. They also contributed to creating a dignified environment for both women and men in migrant and refugee communities, supporting their integration by fostering mutual understanding and empowerment. In Mauritania, host and refugee communities engaged in joint environment protection planning and management to mitigate climate-induced threats to the Mbera refugee camp and surrounding host community localities.

²² ALNAP. 2023. Working across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: What can we learn from evaluations?

²³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2021. *Mapping good practice in the implementation of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approaches: Country Briefs and Synthesis Report*.

Further opportunities to contribute to GCR implementation

Key finding 14

Designing a partnership to complement other actors' efforts at country level is a key success factor for HDP interventions.

In the country contexts studied, in addition to political will, the investment of other international development actors has been a critical factor for the effective implementation of HDP interventions for both GIZ and UNHCR. In both Mauritania and Niger, cooperation between the two organisations complemented major investments by the World Bank in national development planning.²⁴ Conversely, in some implementation contexts SUN-GP missed opportunities to engage with other relevant stakeholders and leverage synergies between HDP interventions.

Going forward, alignment with national development plans and the investments and interventions of international development actors are key criteria for UNHCR and GIZ to consider. In Ethiopia, for example, the World Bank's *Digital ID for Inclusion and Services Project* means that there is a major opportunity for complementary action on access to documentation/digital IDs;²⁵ and there are also large HDP programmes through the Dutch-funded PROSPECTS partnership, EU INTPA, and others.

²⁴ In Mauritania, "ProNexus projects complements other important international projects, especially from the World Bank, and deliberately builds on ongoing processes to advance the ProNexus objectives. For example, ProNexus complements the World Bank in several ways, including through joint support to the civil registry and in supporting the Mbera camp, whereby the World Bank is focused on infrastructure support, eventually enabling UNHCR to decrease in-kind assistance."

²⁵ World Bank. 2016. *ID4D Country Diagnostic: Ethiopia*.

Action on cross-cutting environmental issues offers an opportunity for bringing humanitarian, development and peace actors together to achieve GCR objectives, and there is potential to more systematically address environmental issues through HDP approaches.

Environmental degradation, climate change and natural resources management are cross-cutting issues of relevance for both displaced and host populations, and in relation to humanitarian needs, development, and peace. Environmental issues can be a driver of displacement, and can also be exacerbated by displacement, and it is therefore an area of attention for HDP approaches.

In some cooperation settings, environmental issues are already an area of focus for UNHCR and GIZ, such as through the Energy Solutions in Displacement Settings (ESDS) programme that is part of SUN-GP. In Ethiopia, for example, efforts include strengthening policy frameworks to support energy access in refugee and host communities, and implementation of market-based solutions for members of host communities and displaced populations through improved and clean cookstoves, briquette production, and community-involved energy kiosks. In Mauritania, ProNexus cooperates with the national employment agency Techghil to improve access to environmentally sensitive livelihoods opportunities. These efforts include trainings offered by the agency to refugees and host populations, in cooperation with other actors like the International Labor Organisation (ILO). SUN-GP also includes a contribution to UNHCR's Green Financing Facility and Project Flow to lower carbon emissions by transitioning UNHCR energy use and electricity for community structures, such as health centres, to renewable sources and promoting private sector involvement therein.

Additional opportunities to strengthen incorporation of environmental issues have been observed in Mozambique. Collaboration between GIZ and UNHCR under Nexus Norte does not include an explicit focus on climate change despite the importance that both refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) representatives place on climate resilience given the extreme impact of climate change and natural disasters, such as cyclones. This area holds significant potential for future focus across the HDP nexus as environmental issues are not yet consistently incorporated in HDP approaches and given GIZ's particular track record and expertise in this respect.

Integration of AAP and conflict sensitivity as cross-cutting issues

Mainstreaming of AAP in HDP nexus approaches

Key finding 16

Even though the UNHCR and GIZ partnership employed basic AAP tools and supported the strengthening of local actors' capacity in this respect, gaps remained in taking a more intentional approach to AAP and incorporating feedback into programming.

The UNHCR and GIZ partnership employed a range of common AAP tools throughout their interventions in addition to developing the capacity of government agencies and CSOs/NGOs to improve their application of participatory and AAP approaches. However, there was a missed opportunity for GIZ to learn from UNHCR's well-established AAP mechanisms to incorporate feedback from displaced and host populations into programming. Going ahead UNHCR and GIZ, and other organisations engaging in HDP partnerships in forced displacement settings, can be more deliberate about AAP – including as part of response-wide AAP approaches, as seen in Uganda – by focusing on the following issues:

- › **Move beyond one-way feedback by communicating whether and how feedback is taken onboard:** Although feedback mechanisms are almost always in place, there is often a gap on AAP in terms of communicating how/whether the feedback is taken onboard. The study in Mauritania, for example, pointed out that neither displaced populations or host communities participated in initial design phases. Although this gap was partly a consequence of the COVID-19 lockdown and the challenge of facilitating meaningful digital participation, it nonetheless weakened AAP effectiveness for the project. In Mozambique's Nexus Norte project many beneficiaries felt their input lacked influence. These gaps can result in perceptions that critical issues, such as sexual and physical violence reported in some areas, remain unaddressed. Early community-based consultations are essential for strengthening AAP in intervention design, and ongoing engagement with affected populations is key for identifying issues that require attention as programme implementation progresses.
- › **Check for the inclusion of a broad range of perspectives:** There were some gaps in the country contexts examined in relation to specific categories of people whose perspectives may not have been included and/or gender barriers to participation. These gaps are rooted in inaccurate assumptions about the homogeneity of refugee populations, as diverse backgrounds require nuanced AAP approaches. In Mauritania, for instance, despite efforts to strengthen the project's gender lens, it was noted that gaps remained in terms of tailored support to female-headed households and to families with adolescent girls at risk of child marriage.
- › **Develop a clear approach for collecting, analysing and using information on community participation and AAP across both agencies:** The limited alignment of AAP approaches between humanitarian-focused UNHCR and development-focused GIZ, posed a barrier to collecting, analysing and using feedback and inputs from affected populations and communities. There were unclear roles and communication gaps between GIZ and UNHCR under ProNexus in Mauritania, for instance, which impeded a unified, responsive approach to community feedback. Such lack of alignment limits the effectiveness of conflict-sensitive (see below) and AAP programming. Additionally, while each agency has strong best practices and models, there were challenges in cross learning and harmonising their approaches.

Mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity in HDP approaches

Key finding 17

Differences in terminology and a lack of shared understanding of conflict sensitivity approaches has raised the transaction costs of the partnership and resulted in missed opportunities to jointly mainstream this concept.

The study has identified promising practices under SUN-GP where conflict sensitivity was considered and mainstreamed. In Ethiopia, initiatives like joint training, community-based conflict management, and clean energy initiatives are incorporated as indirect peacebuilding methods. These approaches contribute to stabilising politically sensitive areas and has potential for enabling more ambitious peace efforts if the context allows. The ProNexus project in Mauritania also adopted a similar approach to balance immediate needs with sustainable, inclusive strategies while addressing occasional communal conflicts. Awareness raising among refugees, asylum seekers, and host populations about the importance of social inclusion and coexistence was a positive measure to engage with affected populations and at the same time reduce inter-communal conflicts.

Flexibility is needed to apply conflict sensitivity to the contexts where GIZ and UNHCR operate, and the joint study found that there were gaps in achieving a shared understanding on conflict sensitivity terminology and approaches between the two organisations. For example, in Mozambique, UNHCR's approach predominantly applied a protection sensitivity lens rather than conducting a comprehensive conflict analysis, given government restrictions on explicitly addressing conflict and the need to maintain neutrality in line with the humanitarian principles. Meanwhile, GIZ has routinely applied a conflict sensitive lens to its approach. These two approaches should, in theory, be complementary, with the end goal of conflict sensitivity and protection sensitivity being to ensure that the rights, safety and dignity of displaced persons are upheld and that no harm is done because of the partnership's interventions, or as a result of navigating a challenging political environment. However, in practice, applying separate lenses has created barriers to joint operationalisation between the two organisations. These barriers may limit the partnerships' overall effectiveness in conflict-sensitive programming and underscore the need for ensuring alignment in reporting on conflict-sensitive indicators.

Balancing the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, and host communities presents a complex challenge, particularly where resource scarcity leads to competing priorities.

Effective conflict sensitivity requires careful negotiation, anticipatory analysis, and a nuanced approach to avoid exacerbating tensions, in addition to personnel with explicit responsibility for ensuring conflict sensitive approaches are included and upheld. However, partnerships sometimes struggle to integrate these considerations due to resource and implementation constraints. Funding limitations frequently result in perceived or actual inequities between aid for host communities and refugees, which may heighten social tensions leave beneficiaries feeling unsupported or unfairly treated. In addition, government and partner efforts to foster social cohesion can overlook critical grassroots issues, such as the discrimination that may be experienced by refugees from host communities. This gap undermines trust and limits meaningful social integration, especially where local government bias impedes adequate support for refugees.

Nevertheless, there are opportunities for positive impact in certain contexts. For example, conflict-sensitive approaches, such as integrating women into the brickyard workforce in UNHCR's urbanization project in Niger, have led to improved income levels and a reduction in reports of GBV. Additionally, support to One Stop Shops under SUN-GP in Niger have allowed for centralisation of protection services for refugees and host populations, fostering resilience as local authorities require additional capacity to sustain them. Other good practices were also found in Mexico through the implementation of Peace Circles. Such successes underscore that culturally aware, well-implemented interventions can positively impact social cohesion and local perceptions when aligned with community needs.

Conclusions

Implications for HDP partnerships in contexts of forced displacement

Conclusion 1: The partnership between BMZ/GIZ and UNHCR has successfully drawn on the comparative advantages of each organisation. SUN-GP benefited from the critical funding provided by BMZ to support interventions aimed at greater inclusion of refugees in development frameworks and national services, GIZ technical expertise, and UNHCR experience and know-how on refugee protection and response. In addition, GIZ and UNHCR leveraged their networks to enable stronger connections to be established with in-country stakeholders. These factors were key for supporting alignment with host government national priorities and plans in relation to refugee inclusion and the crucial involvement of stakeholders at national, district and local levels in the implementation of SUN-GP interventions. [Key findings 1, 2, 5, 8]

Conclusion 2: Incorporation of learning processes has been an important element for strengthening collaboration between partners under SUN-GP. Several partnership challenges surfaced during the implementation of SUN-GP, for instance in relation to finding effective communication mechanisms between GIZ and UNHCR and addressing differences in ways of working and in approaches to monitoring. Measures to address these challenges have led to improved information sharing and greater clarity on the role of each organisation in partnership arrangements. Incorporating learning has also been important in the process of mitigating constraining factors and challenges related to the implementation of HDP approaches. For example, in several contexts GIZ and UNHCR effectively identified entry points for supporting national planning frameworks and policies, and efforts to strengthen locally led coordination. [Key findings 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11]

Conclusion 3: There is room for further developing frameworks and tools to measure results achieved for affected populations. Even though both GIZ and UNHCR recognise the importance of measuring progress in applying HDP approaches in displacement settings, this recognition has not been fully translated into monitoring practices that allow measurement of results achieved jointly for affected populations. Joint planning and reviews are important to work towards agreed collective (project) goals and increase ownership, as well as allow reflection and course correction, and these were progressively integrated into partnership working processes. However, further alignment of monitoring practices and strengthened use of monitoring data, including feedback provided by affected populations, would have been beneficial to better understand the effects of SUN-GP's interventions on these groups. [Key findings 7, 16]

Conclusion 4: The implementation models applied under SUN-GP offered strengths and weaknesses to consider in future partnership opportunities, but these are not linked to the implementation model necessarily. The differences between GIZ and UNHCR organisational and planning processes took time to understand, and in some cases had an impact on implementation as well as on the evolution of the partnership between the organisations at country level across different implementation models. Consideration of how these differences may impact the partnership is important at the design stage, as it can inform discussions on project roles and responsibilities, and what may/may not be possible (e.g., in relation to the content of interventions, the meaning of concepts, and timeframes required for the establishment of project processes including recruitment of staff). Attention to these foundational aspects of partnering can also support increased efficiencies. **[Key finding 4]**

Conclusion 5: The study illustrates the importance of strong coordination among stakeholders, including government actors being in the lead, for applying an effective HDP nexus approach. SUN-GP has supported cross-sectoral approaches and capitalised on existing national coordination structures where these are available. This approach includes building on relevant national commitments when designing HDP activities, assessing how realistic objectives are in relation to the country's capacities and needs in different sectors and at different levels of governance, and gauging feasibility in relation to budget processes and financial capacity to absorb displaced populations in national services and economies, including at local level. **[Key findings 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15]**

Conclusion 6: To achieve greatest impact on refugee inclusion, it is critical that partnerships support whole-of-government approaches and bottom-up engagement of local actors (local municipalities and CSOs). Simultaneously providing support to national processes and approaches, and support to local actors with a focus on implementation of activities and priorities, are more likely to lead to a decreased dependency on humanitarian assistance and link with planning for and delivering national objectives. Close attention is needed to ensure the financial sustainability of incorporating refugees into national systems (e.g., social registry and related services) and economies is well planned for, and capacity strengthening is supported in this regard (e.g., through the GCR Advisor role). **[Key findings 10, 11, 12]**

Conclusion 7: The incorporation of beneficiary voices and inputs is critical for improving impact and sustainability of interventions, including through consideration of future areas of focus such as mainstreaming environmental considerations – as well as being crucial from a rights and empowerment perspective. Beneficiaries face differential barriers to access assistance and services, and to achieve an understanding of their needs and how to adapt to them requires consideration of their views and feedback in project design, ongoing monitoring, and adaptation. This focus on AAP is important for project implementers (in this case, GIZ and UNHCR), as well as for the wider HDP ecosystem. In this respect, there is also a need for appropriate, inclusive and responsive monitoring and reporting mechanisms to be in place. **[Key finding 16]**

Conclusion 8: Consideration of social cohesion going forward ought to more deliberately address the specific challenges faced by communities. Detailed, collaborative thinking around what social cohesion means would support more detailed consideration of the peace component of the HDP nexus, as well as contributing to co-learning between stakeholders involved in nexus programmes including national/local governments for sustainability of services. **[Key findings 17 and 18]**

Recommendations

The joint study offers eleven recommendations that distinguish between strategic and operational levels. Four main stakeholder groups were identified as key actors for the uptake and implementation of these recommendations: UNHCR and GIZ (and humanitarian and development actors more broadly), host governments and donors.

Rationale	Recommendation
Partnerships design, set-up and management	
<p>Recommendation 1 Build in flexibility to support partnering processes and dynamics</p> <p>The identification and regular assessment of partners' comparative advantages and disadvantages in sectors of intervention and contexts of focus are necessary to support the achievement of results.</p>	<p>Operational – UNHCR and BMZ/GIZ</p> <p>Provide greater organisational flexibility once partnership has been agreed to integrate necessary adjustments during project implementation, e.g., on the focus of interventions or contributions of partners.</p> <p>Incorporate deliberate reflection points for open and honest communication between partner organisations about comparative advantages for the achievement of results and challenges that may require adaptation or discontinuation of interventions.</p> <p>Operational – donors</p> <p>Allow implementing agencies flexibility to manage and adapt partnerships to capitalise on comparative advantages for the achievement of results.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 Set up light structures to support partnering and implementation of joint initiatives</p> <p>Working in partnership across the HDP nexus requires dedicated structures to support relevant processes, particularly given differences in organisational tools and working cultures and potential needs for adaptation over the course of implementation.</p>	<p>Operational – UNHCR and BMZ/GIZ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Ring-fence dedicated attention and time of staff during appraisal and inception phases of partnership projects to familiarise each other on organisational processes and set expectations on their potential impact on implementation. › Put in place mechanisms to review and manage the potential impact of organisational processes and culture on implementation based on previous good practice, e.g., joint planning and reviews, agreed decision-making processes for considering/introducing project adaptations, and specific working arrangements for more effective/efficient implementation, e.g. co-location. › Ensure the inclusion of HQ and country-level colleagues in discussions during appraisal/inception phases and ongoing review to support dialogue between agencies and adaptation to challenges at all levels impacting implementation. › Include local level in project countries in appraisal missions, in addition to country level, including consideration of the feasibility of decentralising authority to lowest practical level where strongest opportunities for collaboration are identified.
<p>Recommendation 3 Share learning to support effective partnering efforts</p> <p>Thanks to their collaboration on SUN-GP, UNHCR and GIZ have both undergone learning processes that will likely be useful for both organisations in future partnerships with one another as well as with other stakeholders. Learnings should be captured in documentation such as SOPs, recommendations compendiums and/or a collection of good practices and reflections.</p>	<p>Operational – UNHCR and BMZ/GIZ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Drawing on the experience of partnering for SUN-GP, develop guidance internal to each organisation on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Process-oriented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for joint projects. › Recommendations on partnering, e.g., length of programming, managing adaptations following re-appraisal, options for increased efficiency. › Collection of good practices and reflections on division of tasks and responsibilities between HQ and country/local levels. › Maintain learning processes and reflection loops to accompany the partnership.

Rationale	Recommendation
<p>Recommendation 4 Improve the process and utility of joint project monitoring and learning cycles</p> <p>To address the persistence of differences in assessing what constitutes progress on the application of HDP nexus approaches, a more coherent understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of HDP interventions in displacement settings is needed to support inclusion and long-term outcomes.</p>	<p>Strategic – humanitarian partners and development partners (including UNHCR and GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify priority results areas where joint efforts will be invested and measured to monitor results and progress, ensuring these priority areas are kept to a minimum to limit burden on staff and appropriate quality of monitoring data. › Build in reflection and learning loops that draw on monitoring results to ensure the project remains relevant, flexible and adaptable. <p>Operational – humanitarian partners and development partners (including UNHCR and GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify relevant indicators to operationalise priority results areas during the project appraisal/design stage taking into account practical operating realities of partners (e.g., staffing and likely workload involved in collecting monitoring data). › Assess whether and how existing monitoring structures can be capitalised on for the collection of data for joint indicators, building on existing tools where possible. › Classify indicators between those that will be joint indicators focused on synergies, and indicators that are specific to each partner and collected separately. › Engage staff at all levels when developing the monitoring and learning cycle from the outset to draw on their operational knowledge and foster ownership and buy-in. › Establish appropriate learning loops and analysis sessions around monitoring processes with clear mechanisms to use the evidence gathered through monitoring.
HDP approaches for GCR implementation	
<p>Recommendation 5 Foster a whole-of-government approach to ensure alignment and sustainability</p> <p>A unified, whole-of-government approach aligned with international partners is key to the sustainability of solutions in forced displacement contexts.</p>	<p>Strategic – organisations engaging in HDP-focused partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Support host governments in taking the lead on driving socio-economic inclusion of displaced populations in contexts of forced displacement through dialogue between all partners to design collective outcomes, and ongoing engagement to support their achievement. › Identify and collectively address barriers to host governments taking the lead role as appropriate. <p>Operational – host governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify the line ministry/agency responsible for facilitating HDP approaches in displacement contexts, in collaboration with other relevant sectoral ministries/agencies. › Ensure that the identified line ministry/agency and supporting sectoral ministries/agencies are appropriately resourced (financial and staffing) to effectively exercise their responsibilities. › Formulate, in cooperation between line and sectoral ministries/agencies, an operational plan for a whole-of-government approach for the inclusion of displaced populations in national systems and economies. <p>Operational – development actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Working with humanitarian partners, map relevant line/sectoral ministries and agencies within them to identify different needs for capacity strengthening and political dialogue on inclusion of displaced populations and host communities. › Identify any challenges and barriers to the host government driving the HDP approach that can be addressed through political engagement, technical assistance and/or financial support. › Align development partnerships and programmes to government priorities and coordination structures for the inclusion of refugees in relevant policies and strategies across sectors, e.g., economic, health, education, and energy policies. <p>Operational – humanitarian actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Work with development actors to advocate for and support governments to lead on HDP planning, prioritisation and coordination from the outset of an emergency, in line with the principles of sustainable responses. › Engage with development actors to ensure support provided to government authorities accounts for the inclusion of refugees in national priorities and sectoral plans. <p>Operational – donors (multilateral and bilateral)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Support national strategies to focus on the inclusion of refugees in national systems and economies when providing funding and insist that development and humanitarian actors operate within coordinated, unified frameworks towards that goal. › Where possible and appropriate, support political engagement to address barriers within host governments to lead on HDP approaches.

Rationale	Recommendation
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>Ensure vision and operational planning support implementation of inclusion efforts</p> <p>The achievement of concrete lasting outcomes for populations affected by displacement must include efforts to support the inclusion of displaced populations in national services and improve their livelihood opportunities. This will help facilitate the transition to self-reliance and limit aid dependency.</p>	<p>Strategic + operational – host governments</p> <p>Develop a guiding vision for the inclusion of displaced populations in national systems and economies and an operational plan to support its implementation, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Ensure that displaced populations are integrated and costed into existing and new national development strategies and plans. › Within existing and new national development strategies and plans, identify sectors and cross-cutting areas where inclusion of displaced populations can support national development outcomes. › Capitalise on established coordination structures to advance the inclusion of refugees in national systems aligned with the whole-of-government approach. <p>Identify line ministries with clear responsibility for the inclusion of displaced populations, going beyond line ministries with a mandate for migration and forced displacement and encompassing line ministries of national services such as health, economy, education and social protection.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>Capitalise on partners' comparative advantages through systems-based context analyses</p> <p>The identification of priority sectors where humanitarian and development actors can support the inclusion of displaced populations should be based on a detailed context analysis that allows them to strategically formulate their offer and identify areas that may require adaptations, including in addressing issues such as lack of political will, lack of access, or limited influence to effect change.</p>	<p>Strategic – humanitarian partners and development partners (including UNHCR and GIZ)</p> <p>Jointly undertake a systems-based context analysis to identify international, national and local actors within the system for collaboration on application of the HDP nexus and the inclusion of displaced populations, clearly identifying the lead in each context for this joint analysis exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify enabling and constraining factors, including lack of political will and structural barriers that may pose challenges or require adaptations for interventions. › Define which humanitarian and development actors are best placed to collaborate with identified counterparts and to address constraining factors in the partnership.
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>Build and strengthen capacity on sectoral and cross-cutting issues</p> <p>The positioning of humanitarian and development actors supporting HDP nexus approaches in displacement settings must be based on an assessment of national capacity and sectoral entry points to support national ownership and transition planning.</p>	<p>Operational – host governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify sectors (e.g., employment, education, health) and cross-cutting issues (e.g., digital identity for accessing services) where financial, technical, capacity and/or systems strengthening support for inclusion of displaced populations will be required from humanitarian and development actors. › Ensure agreement on transition planning and clear understanding of responsibilities and timelines for transitioning. › Ensure line ministries have the resources, political support and capacity, including coordination with international and national partners. <p>Strategic + operational – development partners (including GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Support the government in identifying sectors and cross-cutting issues in which financial, technical, capacity and/or systems strengthening support will be required for the inclusion of displaced populations. › Coordinate with humanitarian actors on planning and actioning handover pathways to development partners and government leadership/national stakeholders. <p>Strategic + operational – humanitarian partners (including UNHCR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Support the government in strengthening capacity for the inclusion of displaced populations in national systems and economies in identified sectors/on cross-cutting issues. › Draw clear handover pathways in coordination with development partners and government leadership/national stakeholders on sectoral plans and on cross-cutting issues. <p>Strategic + operational – donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Target funding to support national capacity strengthening and inter-sectoral coordination in the context of forced displacement, creating enabling conditions for partnership at national and international level and joint programming.

Rationale	Recommendation
<p>Recommendation 9 Support bottom-up responses and engage with local actors</p> <p>In line with localisation/locally led development commitments and fostering of bottom-up responses to displacement, the engagement of local actors should be prioritised and financial, technical and capacity support provided to them for sustainability and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Operational – host governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Nominate district- and local-level counterparts (if applicable to country context) to lead work with humanitarian and development actors on relevant sectors of intervention for the inclusion of displaced populations. › Ensure dedicated funding is redistributed to district and local levels to support efforts for the inclusion of displaced populations. <p>Strategic + operational – humanitarian partners and development partners (including UNHCR and GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › As part of project planning and appraisal stages, ensure complementarity with interventions for the inclusion of displaced populations at district and local level, and identify technical, financial, and capacity needs that can be supported through HDP approaches. <p>Strategic + operational – humanitarian partners (including UNHCR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › As part of project planning, ensure complementarity with interventions of authorities and other actors for the inclusion of displaced populations at district and local level. › Support authorities in conducting analyses of expected costs of transitioning from humanitarian to national quality standards and engage with development partners and governments to define financing options. <p>Operational – development partners (including GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › As part of project planning and appraisal stages, identify technical, capacity and financing needs that can be supported through development approaches at district and local levels. › Support district and local level stakeholders to analyse costs and draw a financing plan for the inclusion of displaced populations in relevant sectors and services and to draw a financing plan. <p>Operational – donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Require that budgeting for interventions on inclusion of displaced populations integrate allocations at district and local levels, as appropriate. › Require consideration in funding requests for examination of whether and how interventions in refugee-hosting areas can be linked to national and sub-national development plans (e.g., in infrastructure).
<p>Recommendation 10 Systematically collect and use beneficiary perspectives</p> <p>Meaningful engagement with the programme beneficiaries promotes interventions that are more relevant to their needs and project designs, delivery, and adaptations that more effectively integrate their perspectives and views.</p>	<p>Operational – humanitarian partners and development partners (including UNHCR and GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Capitalising on established methods and mechanisms, incorporate monitoring tools for engagement with affected populations on relevant indicators/results areas to support systematic collection, analysis and use of beneficiary data. › Incorporate consideration of beneficiary feedback into learning loops, decision-making and analysis sessions, and adapt interventions accordingly, if needed.
<p>Recommendation 11 Systematically collect and use data on interventions' impact on social cohesion</p> <p>The concept of social cohesion in HDP nexus programming should be further developed. Given both uncertainty around putting the “peace” element of the nexus into practice and the narrow understanding of social cohesion (which is limited to including both refugees and host community members in HDP interventions), HDP partners should further develop their definition of social cohesion entails and use that to inform more appropriate guidance.</p>	<p>Operational – humanitarian partners and development partners (including UNHCR and GIZ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › In jointly implemented projects on HDP nexus, develop joint understanding and, capitalising on existing mechanisms, incorporate monitoring tools for measuring contributions to social cohesion in identified priority result areas to support systematic data collection, analysis and adaptation. › Incorporate consideration of social cohesion dynamics into learning loops and analysis sessions, and adapt interventions as needed to mitigate arising tensions. <p>Operational – development actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Drawing on monitoring data, communicate at district, national and international level how joint interventions are benefitting host communities and integrating displaced populations.

Table 3. Recommendations tailored to relevant stakeholders

Annex 1

Study approach and methodology

The principles underlying GIZ, UNHCR and other actors' collaboration on the operationalization of the HDP nexus include complementarity, collaboration and coherence to address the needs of displaced populations and host communities. In line with these principles, the joint study adopted the diagram in Figure 4 as its overall conceptual framework. The conceptual framework places displaced populations and the communities hosting them at the centre, within local/district and national contexts, and with UNHCR, GIZ and other actors supporting responses to their immediate needs whilst planning for longer term recovery and solutions. These responses intersect and are consistent with the components of the HDP nexus and ensure accountability to affected populations as well as the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity, two cross-cutting issues of relevance to this joint study.

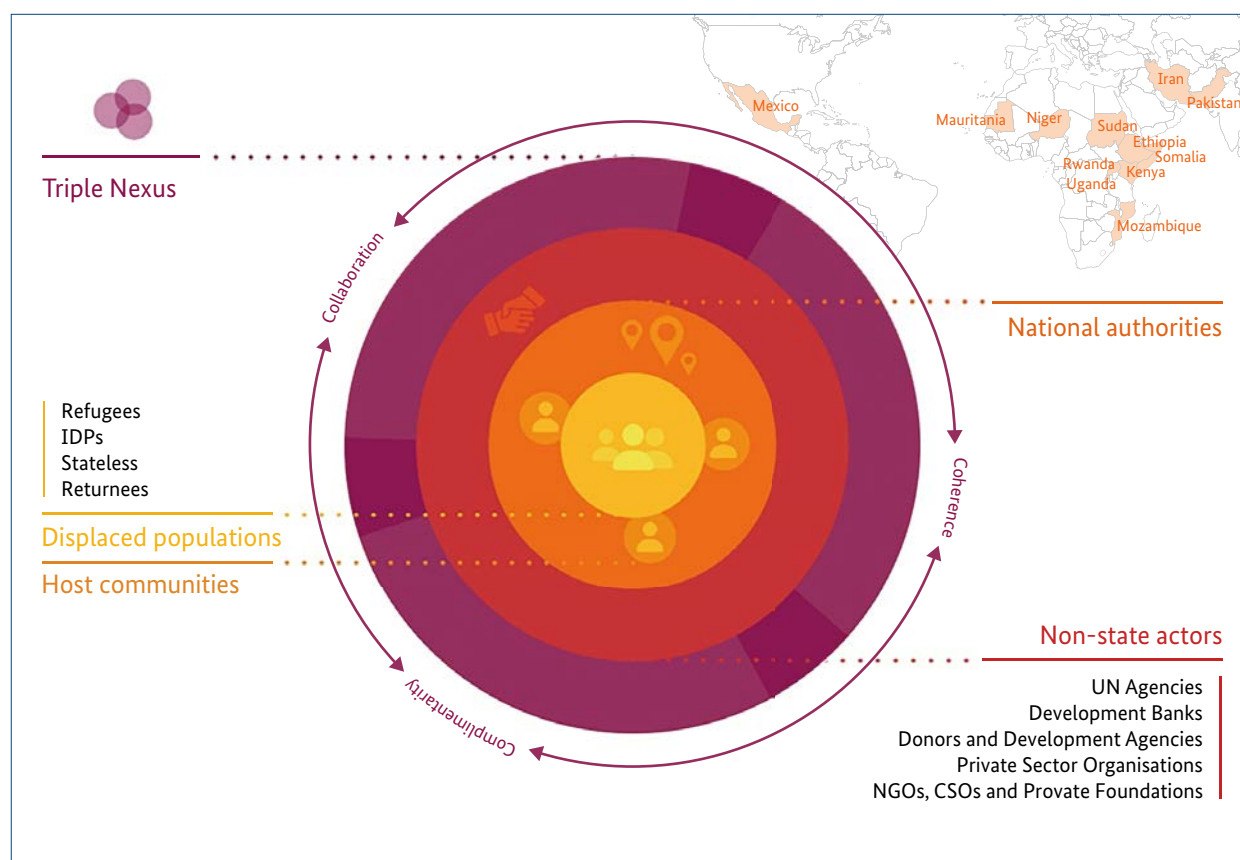


Figure 4. Joint Study Conceptual Framework

The methodology for the joint study was shaped by a Developmental Evaluation approach that allowed for mapping SUN-GP and its various contexts (**what?**), to deep-dive and analyse the various HDP approaches implemented in SUN-GP countries (**so what?**), and to synthesise and extract lessons learned on operationalising the GCR through these HDP approaches (**then what?**). Figure 5 below outlines the joint study areas of focus against the Developmental Evaluation approach components.

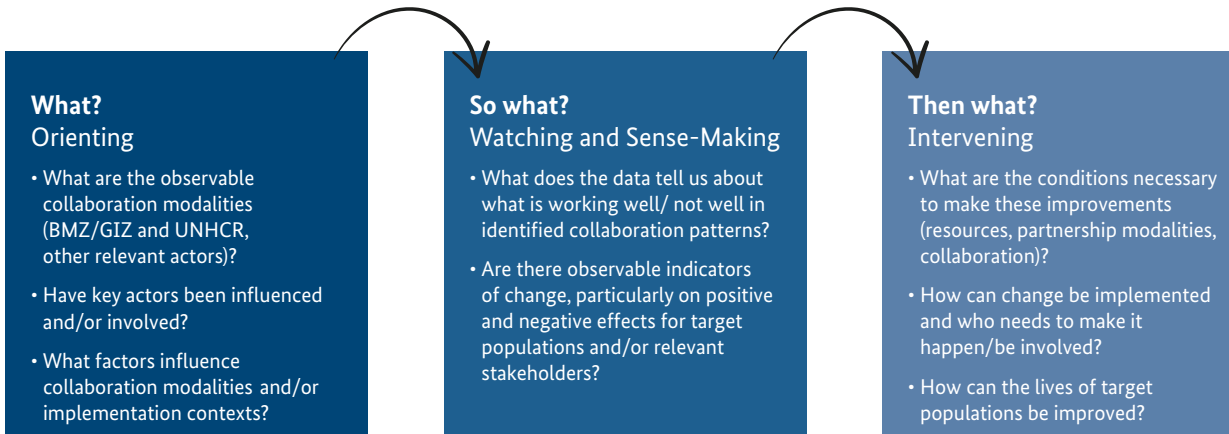


Figure 5. Developmental Evaluation approach joint study focus

The joint study is built on an iterative process of data collection, analysis, and sharing of learning. Data for country case studies was collected at two points over the timeframe of the assignment, and has been complemented with desk studies, participation in events, delivery of webinars and workshops, and continuous exchanges with BMZ, GIZ and UNHCR through regular meetings as well as feedback received through two Steering Group meetings. The timeline and milestones of the joint study process are illustrated in Figure 6 below.

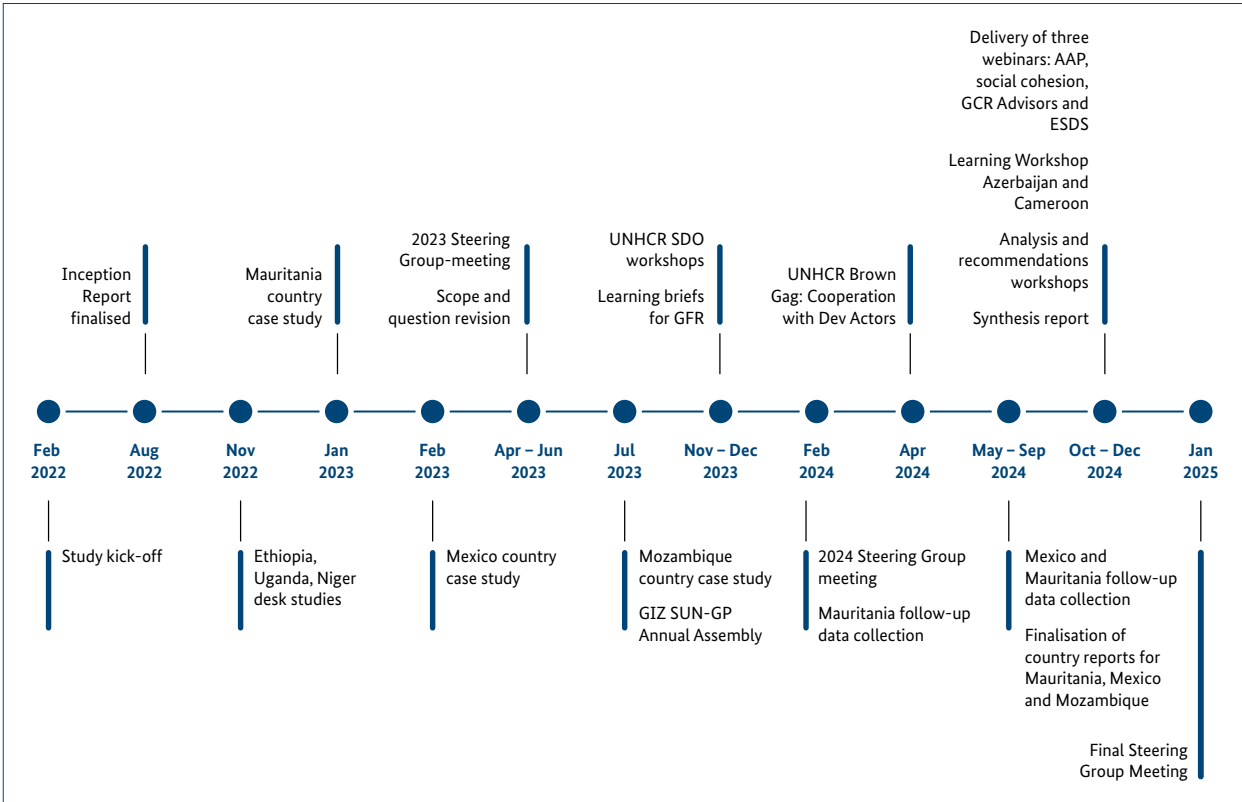


Figure 6. Timeline and milestones of the joint study process

Limitations

The bullet points below outline the main limitations encountered during the implementation of the joint study, and the way in which the joint study team sought to mitigate them.

- › **Change of scope between phases of the joint study:** Following discussions on the inception report with the Steering Group, a deliberate decision was adopted to keep the scope of the joint study broad. However, after the first round of data collection for the Mexico and Mauritania country studies and the Ethiopia, Uganda and Niger desk studies, the scope was refined to render the research more manageable and concrete. The first round of data collection was helpful refocusing the joint study questions. However, this change in scope meant that the framework for subsequent data collection was different to that employed initially. To mitigate the impact of this change, follow-up data collection for Mauritania and Mexico identified gaps in relation to the refined scope; and all data from the joint study was coded and analysed in line with this refined scope to feed into follow-up country reports and this synthesis report.
- › **Different timeframes of implementation in SUN-GP case study countries:** The country cases examined in this joint study had different timeframes, with Mexico and Mauritania having been more advanced and Mozambique in early stages of implementation at the time of data collection. These differences were helpful for gauging learning between countries, and this factor was capitalized on, but it also presented constraints on comparing progress on HDP approaches and on partnership working. The impact of differing timeframes was mitigated mainly through follow-up data collection and review of additional documentation provided.
- › **Limited inputs from SUN-GP countries beyond the case study sample and from GIZ and UNHCR HQ:** The joint study design had a deliberate focus on the three country case studies of Mexico, Mauritania and Mozambique, and Niger, Ethiopia and Uganda as desk studies. Given the difference in contexts between these case studies, and the scope not including engagement with other SUN-GP countries for triangulation and validation, the workshops and webinars delivered to share findings from the joint study served as opportunities to garner the experiences of countries beyond the joint study sample. GIZ and UNHCR HQ level participated in these events, as well as having maintained close engagement with the joint study process throughout and provided feedback on outputs and through Steering Group meetings.
- › **Limited engagement with refugees and host communities:** The joint study counted with participation from refugees and host communities in Mauritania, Mozambique, and Uganda. However, it was not possible to secure access to beneficiaries in Mexico in either round of data collection. Conclusions drawn on the effects of SUN-GP interventions, and in particular in relation to AAP and conflict sensitivity are not inclusive of perspectives from the Mexico case study. The joint study team was unable to mitigate this limitation despite efforts made to ensure inclusion of refugees and host communities in data collection.
- › **Follow-up data collection rounds:** While there have been two iterations of data collection for the country studies to assure results are reflecting 2024 developments, desk study data was only collected in the first round in 2022.

Annex 2

Overview of context and partnership enabling and constraining factors

Over the course of their cooperation, GIZ and UNHCR have collected learnings on key context and partnership enabling and constraining factors for making progress on HDP approaches. Table 4 offers an overview of the enabling and constraining factors emerging from the study.

Identified factors	Enabling and constraining characteristics
Openness / willingness of national government	Government willingness to support inclusion of displaced populations in national systems and economies is a key enabling factor to progress HDP approaches.
Alignment with collective outcomes / inclusion with existing national policies	Setting collective outcomes with stakeholders relevant to the implementation of HDP approaches in displacement settings facilitates coordination on addressing immediate humanitarian needs and transitioning to measures that foster self-reliance and resilience.
Engaging with local/regional government: local ownership	<p>Engaging with regional and local authorities fosters ownership and is consistent with supporting government-led measures for the inclusion of displaced populations.</p> <p>Failing to engage with local and regional government may lead to constrained coordination, and limited buy-in of local and regional authorities and of options for transitioning to longer-term solutions.</p>
Capacity of national, regional and local government	<p>Local government plays a critical role for the effective implementation of HDP approaches as they are directly responsible for service delivery in most contexts.</p> <p>However, the local level is also where there are greatest fiscal and capacity constraints; where these are not addressed, they can act as a constraining factor for the implementation of HDP approaches.</p>
Pre-existing relations between humanitarian and development actors, physical proximity	<p>Strong relationships between humanitarian and development actors before or at the outset of project implementation, and physical proximity during implementation, enables regular formal and informal exchanges and interactions that can be fostered to support implementation of HDP approaches.</p> <p>Where these relationships are not fostered at the outset and during implementation of HDP approaches, it may lead to gaps in communication, and misaligned expectations of partnership processes and ways of working.</p>
Technical expertise of partners and understanding of implementation context	Establishing multi-sectoral government platforms at national and sub-national levels, embedding staff in government institutions, and focusing on areas of value add of partners for implementation enable implementation of HDP approaches. These factors account for the inclusion of sectors of relevance to the implementation of HDP approaches and of different levels of governance and ensure capitalisation on the comparative advantages of relevant stakeholders.
Shared understanding on HDP nexus approach	<p>Clear, shared understanding of the HDP nexus in partnership implementation may facilitate the division of roles and responsibilities, coordination and transition planning, and agreement on monitoring and reporting priorities.</p> <p>Lack of a shared understanding may lead to gaps in defining roles and responsibilities and/or in establishing coordination mechanisms with relevant HDP stakeholders and may also compromise how and what results are measured.</p>
Coordination with other HDP actors	<p>HDP solutions require the development of an ecosystem of actors that can work effectively, including when technical and financial support decreases.</p> <p>Weak coordination can significantly limit the scale and scope of impact and constrain the potential for moving towards comprehensive government-led measures.</p>

Identified factors	Enabling and constraining characteristics
Institutional and cultural differences between partners	Different planning, budgeting, implementation, M&E logics, and timeframes between HDP actors can be a challenge if not carefully considered in project design and accounted for in implementation processes.
Operational presence at different governance levels	<p>Field presence, e.g. for a deeper understanding of local contexts and knowledge of stakeholder, is key for ensuring HDP approaches and interventions are tailored to the operational context.</p> <p>Limited field presence and/or knowledge of stakeholder landscape may pose constraints on effective implementation of HDP approaches.</p>
Poor communication from global to national and/or local level	<p>The absence of appropriate feedback loops from field to capital and HQ level to support design, implementation, and course correction are a constraining factor to partnership working.</p> <p>Gaps in the sensitisation of staff on what is expected of them in a partnership context is also a constraining factor.</p>
Partnership response to external shocks	<p>Partnership responses to shifts in needs or urgency due to factors like increased displacement or conflict can be an enabling factor for effective response to these shocks if appropriate response measures and roles and responsibilities are clear.</p> <p>These responses, however, may be constrained if partnership roles and responsibilities are not clear, or if coordination processes with other stakeholders are not adequate to adapt to changing contexts.</p>

Table 4. Context and partnership enabling and constraining factors

Annex 3

Monitoring and evaluation framework steps

Figure 7 outlines six proposed steps to strengthen the integration of monitoring and learning processes into project design and implementation modalities. The diagram draws on evidence of areas identified during the joint study process.



Figure 7. Six steps for developing the monitoring and learning framework

Annex 4

Key findings, conclusions and recommendations

Key findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Lessons learnt, gaps, and opportunities in partnership set-up and project design		
Key finding 1 Under SUN-GP, BMZ/GIZ have provided critical funding and shared technical expertise to complement UNHCR's efforts to foster sustainable, long-term planning and the inclusion of refugee support within development frameworks, national services and economies.	1	1
Key finding 2 The partnership model under SUN-GP fostered stronger connections with in-country stakeholders by utilising the established trust and networks of both agencies.	2	1, 2, 5
Key finding 3 The partnership under SUN-GP has drawn on learnings from previous experiences, both between GIZ and UNHCR, and with other actors. This learning involves refining roles, enhancing communication, and strategically aligning efforts to maximise impact for refugees and host communities.	2	2, 3, 4
Key finding 4 Each of the transaction, non-transactional and joint implementation modalities under SUN-GP offers strengths and weaknesses. Despite offering a higher degree of partnership integration, the joint implementation modality does not guarantee greater degrees of success compared with the transactional and non-transactional modalities.	4	1, 2, 3
Key finding 5 The division of responsibilities under SUN-GP has shown efficiencies in achieving a balanced, multi-faceted response to complex challenges around displacement.	1 and 2	1, 2, 3
Key finding 6 In contexts where GIZ and UNHCR began implementation at different times, misaligned implementation timelines negatively affected collaboration and sustained results for joint activities.	2	1, 2
Key finding 7 There is room to improve how progress in achieving results for affected populations is measured, and there are additional opportunities to strengthen monitoring approaches under all implementation models reviewed in the joint study.	2 and 3	4
Key finding 8 Forced displacement responses should align with the needs and priorities of host governments who hold ultimate responsibility in shifting from short-term humanitarian response to long-term planning for refugee inclusion. This alignment facilitates the identification of clear entry points and concrete contributions that humanitarian and development actors can make to operationalise the HDP nexus.	1, 2 and 5	5, 6, 7
Key finding 9 Early government engagement by humanitarian and development partners and joint strategy development at both national and local levels is important for enhancing political ownership and alignment with national priorities.	5	8, 9
Key finding 10 Clear coordination structures are essential in managing comprehensive responses to displacement that leverage nexus approaches. Humanitarian and development actors can support efforts to put in place coordination structures to implement overarching planning frameworks, which in turn can lead to more efficient resource allocation and better outcomes for affected displaced populations.	2, 5 and 6	5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Imprint

Published by the
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany
Global Programme RISE
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32 + 36
53113 Bonn, Germany

<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/141945.html>

Design
kipconcept gmbh, Bonn

Photo credits
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On behalf of the
German Federal Ministry for
Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

As at
May 2025