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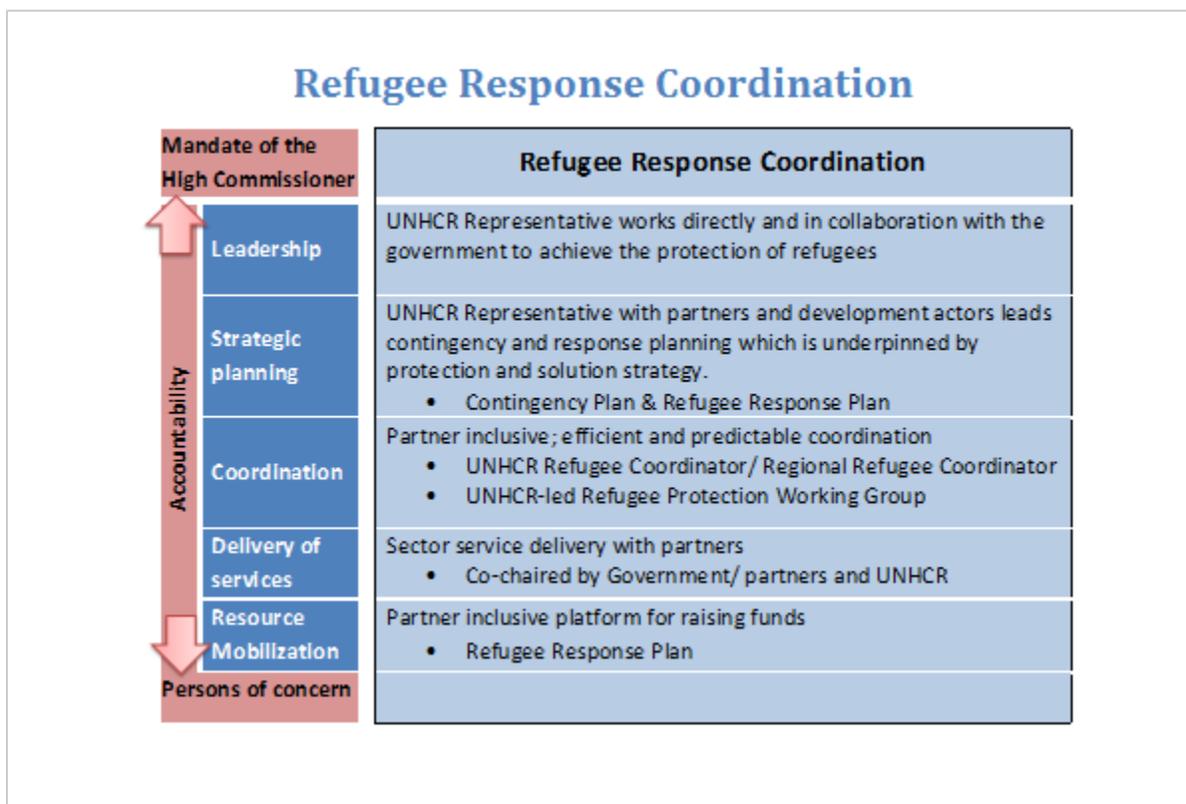
Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)

Key points

- Primary responsibility to protect refugees rests with states. Coordination of the refugee response is determined by capacity and approaches of host government and builds on resources of refugees and hosting communities.
- The Refugee Coordination Model is applicable in all refugee situations (stand alone or mixed) and throughout the duration of a refugee response. The Joint UNHCR-OCHA note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice builds on, and further elaborates the principles of Refugee Coordination Model for mixed situations. It does not replace the RCM.
- Refugee response does not only include UNHCR's operations, but those of all actors involved in the response.
- To exert leadership, one needs a plan that has been developed inclusively, and that provides strategic direction for operational actors, can easily interact with other instruments such as the SRP, and that presents a coherent picture to donors and other Member States. The main instruments for this are the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) and/or the Regional RRP. These can be both stand-alone documents, or included in a SRP as a separate refugee chapter.
- UNHCR's refugee response includes the needs of host communities, which is central to the preservation of asylum space and to the social cohesion necessary for a protective environment for refugees and their hosts.
- RCM does not diminish UNHCR's responsibility for refugees or its accountability to them. Rather the RCM presents an opportunity to work in unison with other humanitarian and development actors to improve services to persons of concern and other persons in need.
- Certain aspects of the RCM may contract or expand when interfacing with other coordination mechanisms. Each situation is unique' there may be a combination of coordination arrangements in the country.
- The UNHCR Representative is responsible for leading all aspects of the refugee response, and representing the 3 UNHCR led clusters (as applicable) as well as UNHCR in the HCT in mixed situations.
- The RCM or Joint Note maintain an integral yet distinct approach. In mixed situations, refugee operations will be an integral part of the overall humanitarian response but will be distinct and stand alone for international protection and accountability purposes .
- Coordination is a means to an end: facilitate effective and timely response. Increase efficiency- streamline number of meetings and provide/share a platform for coordinating and discussion on refugee/IDP matters by having refugee/IDP issues as fixed agenda items on sector/cluster meetings and/or hold joint meetings.
- Provide space and visibility to all organisations working in the refugee response on web portals, sitreps, fact-sheets and other information products.
- Establish linkages with national partners and development partners, pursuing durable solutions and soliciting financial resources for refugees.
- Leadership styles have to be democratic not autocratic- forge respectful and collaborative relationships with partners and stakeholders.

The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) is the basis for leading and coordinating refugee operations; it is an articulation of our shared duty towards refugees, and a statement of both an integrated humanitarian vision and a distinct responsibility. Together with the UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations, the RCM provides the framework and the principles through which refugee and mixed situations are to be approached.

The coordination of international protection, assistance and solutions is inherent to UNHCR's refugee mandate and drives from the High Commissioner's accountability for ensuring international protection from the time an individual becomes a refugee until he or she finds a solutions, whether residing in urban or rural host communities or in camps, alongside internally displaced people (IDPs) and other population affected by humanitarian crises or in non-emergency settings.



2. Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

Historic, mandated responsibility to protect refugees, and to coordinate action on their behalf

As the global refugee organization of the UN and as such, the Statute places the High Commissioner and his Office at the centre of the international refugee response system. To advance the protection and assistance of persons of concern, UNHCR over 60 years collaborated with Governments and developed partnerships with other international agencies and NGOs. Through annual consultations with NGOs and structured dialogues with key partners, as well as MOUs and LOUs with other UN agencies, other inter-governmental organizations and NGOs, networks of partnerships and collaboration have also been established.

UNHCR has effectively led and managed refugee operations for decades however it had not articulated a model of refugee coordination for the evolving humanitarian landscape. By clarifying roles and responsibilities, the Refugee Coordination Model makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable. It offers a partner inclusive platform for planning and coordinating refugee operations; clarifies the coordination modalities in relation to broader humanitarian coordination structures, under the overall leadership of the host government. UNHCR's approach to coordination is determined by the needs and concerns of refugees and persons of concern and the operational context. Coordination is a means to an end; the purpose of which is to ensure refugees and other persons of concern receive protection and assistance they need through the collective efforts and capacities of all agencies involved. Designed accordingly, the RCM:

- Reaffirms States' primary responsibility to protect refugees, and the High Commissioner's mandate for international refugee protection and for supporting host governments with refugee response leadership and coordination.
- Affirms that coordination of the refugee response is determined by the capacity and approaches of the host Government and builds on the resources of refugees and host communities.
- Makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable, inclusive and partner-friendly, to ensure that refugees receive the assistance and protection they need throughout the duration of the refugee response.
- Aligns UNHCR practice with the Transformative Agenda in the key areas of leadership, coordination and accountability.
- Focuses on solutions and resilience and greater collaboration with development actors.

Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice (26 April 2014)

In the interest of achieving greater effectiveness by ensuring that coordination is streamlined, complementary and mutually reinforcing, and to avoid duplication at the delivery level in humanitarian operations, UNHCR and OCHA in April 2014 signed the "*OCHA-UNHCR Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice*" - which spells out mutual roles and responsibilities, and outlines respective leadership and coordination functions in mixed situations: where a complex humanitarian emergency or natural disaster is taking place, a Humanitarian Coordinator has been appointed, and a UNHCR-led refugee operation is also underway.

The High Commissioner's accountability for persons of concern remains unchanged; the Joint Note is about achieving greater operational efficiency through flexible and pragmatic arrangements, not about transfer of accountability or responsibility. The High Commissioner's responsibilities, combined with his advocacy and supervisory role, also mean that he must retain an oversight and monitoring role, within the UN response, over the delivery of services to refugees. UNHCR's refugee response is an **integral yet distinct** element in the overall humanitarian coordination architecture. By developing integrated and strategic visions, but maintaining distinct yet interoperable plans and funding tools, coherence and transparent respective accountabilities and responsibilities are maintained.

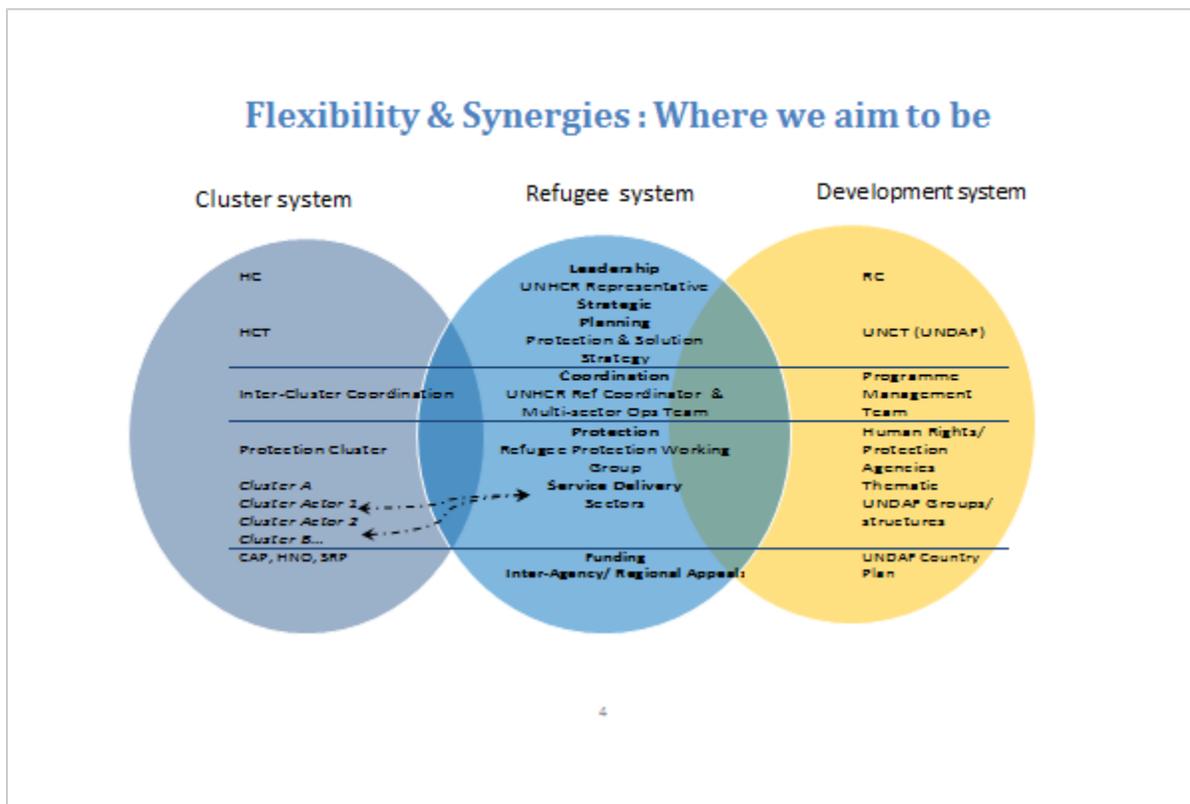
Therefore the RCM is applicable **in all refugee situations and throughout a refugee response**, whether it is in a new or protracted emergency, or located in a camp, rural dispersed or in urban settings or in mixed situations. The Joint Note builds on, and further elaborates the principles of RCM for mixed situations. Certain features of the RCM may contract or expand depending on size and length of the

response and operational context.

Where IDPs and refugees reside in the same locations, either clusters or sectors capacities can be used based on considerations of:

- operational context
- Location of responses (geographically together, or separate)
- Size of refugee and IDP populations
- Capacity of UNHCR sectors / IDP clusters to deliver services according to the specific needs of both population groups

The decision on use of sector and clusters capacities for the response is to be taken by the High Commissioner and the Emergency Relief Coordinator.



3. Policy, strategy and/or guidance

The Refugee Coordination Model explains and standardizes UNHCR's leadership, coordination, and delivery of the refugee response.

The UNHCR Representative is responsible for leading and coordinating the broader refugee response which should be predictable, partner-inclusive and collaborative.

'Partner' is understood to refer to any agency or humanitarian entity that is involved in or supporting the refugee response.

For issues related to refugee coordination, Inter-Agency Coordination Services (IACS) – DER is the focal point.

KEY ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	REFUGEE OPERATIONS	Additional actions in MIXED SITUATIONS
1. SHARE AND REVIEW RCM/JOINT NOTE	Share and review the RCM with all staff of your office and identify which elements are in place, which elements need to be adapted, and how gaps (if any) need to be addressed.	Share and review the RCM & Joint Note with all staff in your office and identify which elements are in place, which elements need to be adapted, and how gaps (if any) need to be addressed.
2. INTER-AGENCY CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS (see entry on Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies)	<p>Prior to the emergency, lead the development of an inter-agency refugee contingency plan (CP), with relevant Government entities. Involve relevant partners, including development actors, from the start.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the UNCT on refugee matters and lead related discussion. 	<p>Prior to the emergency lead the development of an inter-agency refugee contingency plan (CP), with relevant Government entities. I.e. Involve partners, including development actors, from the start. If an inter-agency IDP Contingency Plan is developed at the same time, the Refugee CP can be included but as a distinct chapter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the HC/HCT on refugee matters regularly, and lead discussion on the standing agenda item in HCT meetings on Refugee Preparedness and Response. • Ensure coherence with the overall humanitarian response.

<p>3. REQUEST BUREAU TO CONVENE A TELECONFERENCE WITH HQ</p>	<p>Discuss with Directors of Bureau, DER, DESS, DPSM and DIP as soon as there is a new/escalating emergency. Agree on how to apply the RCM, and identify the support needed from HQ.</p>	<p>Discuss with Bureau Director whether to convene a meeting with DER, DESS, DPSM and DIP as soon as there is a new/escalating emergency. Agree how to apply the RCM & Joint Note, and the working relationship with HC and OCHA, potential optimal coordination arrangements and the support needed from HQ.</p>
<p>4. ESTABLISH COORDINATION TEAM</p>	<p>§ Designate the Refugee Coordinator (the RC is a function, not a post. A colleague may be nominated or, where warranted, an additional person can be brought in.) § Assign the Multi-Sector Operations Team (MSOT) (led by the RC it includes sector-coordinating agencies; Head of Refugee Protection Working Group; information management officer/s, needs assessments experts, external relations officer/s and sector specialists) § Clearly delineate names, functions and reporting lines for the team. § Request deployments if needed from DESS/Emergency Services(ES).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate the Refugee Coordinator (the RC is a function, not a post. A colleague may be nominated or, where warranted, an additional person can be brought in). • The RC must coordinate across and work closely with the Inter-cluster Coordinator and, where possible, hold joint meetings with the inter-cluster coordination group. • Assign the Multi-Sector Operations Team (MSOT) (led by the RC it includes sector-coordinating agencies; Head of Refugee Protection Working Group; information management officer/s, needs assessments experts, external relations officer/s and sector specialists) • Clearly delineate names, functions, and reporting lines for the team. <p>§ Request deployments if needed from Emergency Services.</p>

<p>5. AGREE MODALITIES WITH OTHER COORDINATION ACTORS</p>	<p>Brief Government, Resident Coordinator(RC), UNCT, NGOs and other actors about UNHCR's role and responsibilities in leading and coordinating the refugee response.</p>	<p>Meet the Humanitarian Coordinator(HC), and agree on coordination modalities which are in line with the Joint Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief Government, HC, the HCT, NGOs and other actors about UNHCR's role and responsibilities in leading and coordinating the refugee response. • Present updates on the refugee response and UNHCR-led clusters at HCT.
<p>6. ENGAGE KEY PARTNERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Government, key partners and relevant development actors in preparing the protection and solution strategy and refugee response plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Government, HC, key members of HCT, partners and relevant development actors when preparing the protection and solution strategy underpinning the refugee response plan.

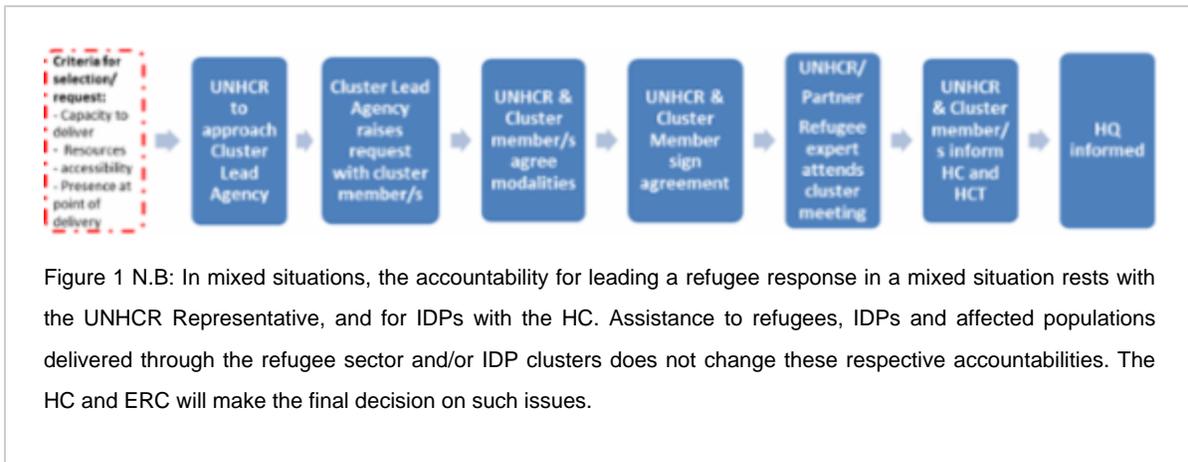
<p>7. ESTABLISH REFUGEE PROTECTION WORKING GROUP (RPWG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG) and designate the UNHCR Head of the RPWG. • Invite Government to co-lead if appropriate and feasible. • Invite partners and protection actors. Analyse the protection situation and, in partnership with refugees, agree on strategic objectives, response and advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG) and designate the UNHCR Head of the RPWG. • Invite Government to co-lead if appropriate and feasible. • Invite partners and protection actors. Analyse the protection situation and, in partnership with refugees, agree on strategic objectives, response and advocacy. • Work closely with the Protection Cluster and streamline meetings at field and capital level. If many agencies are simultaneously involved in IDP and refugee responses, meetings can be held jointly or consecutively, (as agreed by the group) with the Protection Cluster while <i>retaining respective accountabilities</i>. These meetings may be co-chaired by the Head of RPWG and the Protection Cluster Coordinator.
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<p>8. ADVOCATE FOR REFUGEES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise leadership role for advocacy with host government on refugee issues • lead private / public advocacy on refugee issues • Mobilize other relevant actors and involve them in advocacy strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain lead role on advocacy for refugees • Support the overall advocacy efforts of the HC and HCT on other humanitarian issues • Perform the specific advocacy role of the Protection cluster lead.
<p>9. INVITE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT ENTITIES AND PARTNERS TO CO-COORDINATE SECTORS (see entry on sector co-ordination)</p>	<p>Depending on the scale of the refugee crisis, establish sector working groups (Health/Nutrition, Shelter/NFIsetc.), and invite partners who meet the requirements to co-ordinate the sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure close linkage between the sectors and the RPWG at field and capital level. • Determine how refugee coordination mechanisms between field and capital level sectors will take place. • Communicate refugee sector coordination modalities to all partners and relevant actors. 	<p>In <u>geographically mixed situations</u>, where IDPs and Refugees reside in the same locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and agree with the HC, sector/clusters leads and other relevant actors the most effective and efficient way to deliver services to both population groups. Be open to practical combinations of coordination arrangements. • Follow the steps below to engage cluster members in delivery of services in the refugee response. • Where clusters are utilized, assign a refugee expert to work within clusters to ensure refugee issues are addressed.

<p>10. COORDINATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (see entry on needs assessment)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate needs and share analysis with sectors and RPWG. • As much as possible encourage partners to hold joint needs assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with the Inter-Cluster Coordinator the feasibility and extent to which needs assessment can be held jointly or can incorporate refugee requirements (and vice versa, if sectors respond for IDPs.)
<p>11. DEVELOP AND/OR UPDATE INTER-AGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN AND APPEAL (RRP) AND LAUNCH (see entry of Refugee Response Plan) The plan is based on the protection and solution statement and outlines response strategy, planned activities, and funding requirements of partners and represents the collective vision and action for all actors involved.</p>	<p>Lead and launch the inter-agency Refugee Response Plan (RRP) as soon as a new/escalating emergency starts. Inter-agency planning should take place for non-emergency situations as well.</p>	<p>Lead and launch an inter-agency Refugee Response Plan (RRP) as soon as a new/escalating emergency starts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a small strategy planning group of no more than 6-8 key partners involved in the response and government counterparts. This group should establish the protection and solutions statement, strategic objectives of the response and funding requirements of the response and jointly with the MSOT develop the RRP. • Advocate for the refugee response plan with in-country donors and humanitarian stakeholders. • Develop and include Refugee Response Chapter in the Preliminary Response Plan (PRP) for system-wide Level 3 emergencies, if refugees residing in that country are affected by the situation, resulting in a system-wide emergency declaration..

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a small strategy planning group of no more than 6-8 key partners involved in the response and government counterparts. This group should establish the protection and solutions statement, strategic objectives of the response and funding requirements of the response and jointly with the MSOT develop the RRP. • Advocate for the refugee response plan with in-country donors and humanitarian stakeholders. • Assign a focal point who will coordinate planning process, share information and liaise with partners to collect information on funding, and provide it to DRRM monthly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a Strategic Response Plan has been initiated or is being revised, contribute the Refugee Response Chapter- this should be a high level summary of the inter-agency RRP. (Use DER/DPSM instructions on inter-agency planning and resource mobilization, SRP Guidance & template.) The SRP does not duplicate or replace UNHCR-led country operations planning. • Consult Bureau and DRRM before contributing to any IASC documents (SRP, PRP etc.). • Support the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) with CERF and Pooled Fund applications, management, and reporting procedures on refugee projects. • Assign a focal point who will coordinate refugee planning process, share information and liaise with partners to collect information on funding, and provide it to DRRM monthly.
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<p>12. MANAGE AND SHARE INFORMATION Resource: Emergency IM Toolkit: http://data.unhcr.org/imtoolkit/ .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the Information Management Strategy with Bureau and DER and define activities and products about the refugee response that are to be developed and shared. • Ensure that there is a forum and focal point for inter-agency information. • Set up an operational data portal (website for the response). Include accurate and updated contact details and information about: UNHCR and partners, inter-agency coordination and sector meetings, assessments, strategic plans, reports, maps, population data and analysis, monitoring and evaluation reports. • Hold regular briefings for donors, stakeholders and key partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the Information Management Strategy with Bureau and DER and define activities and products about the refugee response that are to be developed and shared. • Ensure that there is a forum and focal point for inter-agency information. The focal point should coordinate the collection and sharing of information and operational data with OCHA. • Set up an operational data portal (website for the response). Include accurate and updated contact details and information about: UNHCR & partners, inter-agency coordination and sector meetings, assessments, strategic plans, reports, maps, population data and analysis, monitoring and evaluation reports. • Ensure that the operational data portal web link is displayed on the OCHA country website. • Hold regular briefings for donors, stakeholders and key partners to brief on refugee issues.
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4. Role of partners involved

The RCM is partner-friendly and inclusive. 'Partners' is understood to refer to any agency or humanitarian entity that is involved in or supports the refugee response.

Partners play a key role in strategy development, contingency and response planning, delivery of services through sectors, and advocacy.

5. UNHCR's role and accountabilities

- The UNHCR Representative leads direct advocacy on all protection matters with the host Government, mobilizes other relevant actors, and leads private as well as public advocacy on refugee issues. In addition, s/he leads strategic planning with all operational partners and co-chairs an inclusive coordination platform at national level with the Government where needed.
- The UNHCR Refugee Coordinator leads and coordinates a multi-sectoral response, supported by a Multi-Sector Operations Team with expertise and capacity to facilitate needs assessment, planning, monitoring, reporting, and information management across all sectors.
- The UNHCR-led Refugee Protection Working Group is responsible for the coordination of protection strategies and activities and for mainstreaming protection throughout other operational sectors.

6. Links

Refugee Coordination Model external link

Refugee Coordination Model internal link

7. Media

The High Commissioner's video message

Need help?

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Annexes

- Refugee Coordination Model
- Joint UNHCR and OCHA, Note on Mixed Situations. Coordination in Practice
- Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and his Office

Version and document date

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