LESSONS ON UNHCR-WFP COLLABORATION IN HUB SUPPORTED COUNTRIES

Established in April 2020 with the support of the US Government, the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub has been providing support to UNHCR-WFP collaboration in a range of strategic and technical thematic areas in Cameroon, DRC, Jordan, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia.

From September to November 2021 the Hub held a series of stocktaking discussions with senior management and focal points from each country office to reflect on the successes, challenges, and ways forward for UNHCR-WFP collaboration, and the role of the Hub. The key findings and recommendations listed in this document reflect the feedback provided by the country office teams.

KEY FINDINGS

THE ROLE OF THE HUB

Many planned joint deliverables would not have been possible without Hub support. In this regard, the Hub has fulfilled two key roles:

1. **Coordination**; bringing actors together, facilitating dialogue, and managing and facilitating processes, including the development of joint work plans, with timelines and roles and responsibilities.

The **neutral role of the Hub** was also greatly appreciated despite the Hub being perceived as agency-aligned on occasion. This was either because some Hub units are perceived to have a specific agency profile (WFP vs UNHCR contract holders), or because Hub technical advice coincided with one agency's standpoint.

2. **Technical;** by leading certain activities such as the development of assessment methodology, sampling, questionnaire design, training, analysis, or report writing.

The Hub **filled key technical gaps** where technical capacity was not present in most of the operations or wasn't utilized due to competing priorities. There has been great appreciation for the **technical rigor and quality** of the Hub's work.

Success factors include:

- Dedicated Hub staff time, including in-county missions to work on technical issues and to guide processes.
- **Proactiveness** in providing country offices with options, not problems.
- **Flexibility** on undertaking additional tasks such as giving trainings, presentations, or drafting documents.
- The provision of additional staff capacity and budgetary support.

In general, **remote support has worked well, allowing for greater ownership** of processes by country offices.

In-country support and **joint missions** have been beneficial at specific times during the process and would have been **beneficial at early stages** of Hub support. At crucial periods, in-country missions could also have **helped to build consensus** and to unpack technical issues that became bottlenecks and slowed decision making.

> *"We turned the Hub technical support into a bigger opportunity to be more aligned to the inclusion agenda and to build this link with the government social registry."*

CAPACITY

Some capacity has been built in areas such as knowledge of the targeting process, joint assessments, community consultations, and appeals.

Additional capacity building was highlighted as a particular need, particularly with staff turnover.

It is **not possible to build certain technical capacity** without significant investment (such as for analysis to inform the development of targeting criteria). This capacity would need to be built through creating or changing positions within the country offices rather than through training or mentoring.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-2021

UNHCR-WFP joint assessments in Cameroon, DRC, Jordan, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Zambia to inform joint targeting and prioritization exercises as well as country strategies and programme design.

Use of evidence for robust, joint programme design with a view to long-term transition and improved self-reliance. Examples of the results of this work include increased funding for food assistance in Rwanda, and strategic and programmatic changes in Zambia.

Accountability to affected people and data sharing support provided by the Hub has led to an increase in joint planning and implementation of activities at country level.

Some types of support from the Hub are being **incorporated into new ways of working** (such as joint post-distribution monitoring integrating both agencies' corporate indicators, and appeals processes).

For some activities that are highly technical

> *"The Hub prepared the ground for decision making, coming always with options, and we were able to make informed decisions because of this technical background work."*

and less frequent (such as the development of a new targeting model) there will **continue to be a need for outside support**.

The role of the Hub in **documenting best practices, tools, and examples** was highlighted as important to support capacity.

Where operational requirements outstrip available in-country capacity (both financial and human resources), the Hub model of support is sub-optimal in achieving expected outcomes. A minimum amount of availability and operational capacity is required for the application of collaborative targeting and programming efforts.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Success rested on **individual motivations and availability of colleagues** to engage and work collaboratively. There was a **lack of engagement and ownership from certain functions**. Collaborative efforts are often seen as an additional burden, rather than part and parcel of each agency's priorities.

Involving certain team members was a challenge with **limited internal communication amongst country office teams**, including at the field level, leading to perceptions of a **top-down approach** and need for the Hub to coordinate internally.

> *"I would advise country offices to go to the Hub with clear objectives. Go to the Hub in terms of technical capacity and also resources, and also to enhance skills, as they will be having discussions with people who are very knowledgeable and who also have a range of technical skills and knowledge."*

Focal points in the field must have ownership, which hasn't always happened.

There is a need for joint work to be **mainstreamed in job descriptions and ToRs**, increased internal coordination, and for **senior management oversight and follow-up**.

UNHCR's staffing structure doesn't match as well with Hub workstreams, which can require the involvement of many non-technical colleagues.

It has been **difficult for non-technical colleagues to engage in technical discussions**, despite their engagement being essential to the process.

There has been a **lack of clarity on the role and involvement of regional bureaus** in supporting processes.

LEVELS OF ENGAGAMENT

This has been a time-consuming initiative, especially for the designated focal points, and the **time needed to engage in comprehensive processes was widely underestimated**.

Despite Hub staff leading many activities, the **rigourousness of exercises** was often seen as **too onerous** for many colleagues, sometimes leading to disengagement and turnover of involved colleagues with efficiency losses

There was a tendency in some operations to be overambitious, with **too many deliverables** added to initial Scope of Work documents, **without fully understanding the work and commitment involved**.

> *"This was the first time we were developing a targeting model together. It was a very strong contribution from the Hub side on the development, which has supported a robust model, and the exchange of learning and expertise."*

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the beginning of any engagement clearly **outline key steps, roles and responsibilities, and expectations** for each stage of the process for any technical activity. Engage in clear discussions with management before assigning focal points.

Assess available capacity: Where operations are already overstretched and do not have dedicated operational capacity available, expectations should be managed carefully. The Joint Hub can advise and support but there must be significant country office ownership and engagement.

Integrate **exit strategies**, knowledge transfer and capacity building objectives and plans from the beginning of the process.

Initiate Hub support with an **inception mission and workshop** that would also involve senior management and give an overview of process, expectations, and examples of results from other countries

Ensure senior management engagement from the beginning, and systematic management check-ins. Have regular calls/ updates for senior management to ensure engagement and ownership as well as timely decision making.

Flag key decisions and what will be coming up, giving an overview of what type of options/ decisions will need to be made in advance.

Identify bottlenecks and challenges that are causing delays in decision making and activities, and identify solutions to these to better management timeframes.

Engage in capacity building of country office staff on key concepts and technical terminology and uses.

Make technical content accessible and easy to understand and engage with for non-technical colleagues.

Expand library of **examples from other country operations**, regions and contexts as readily **available reference documents** to support country offices' understanding of available methodologies and approaches.

Improve the **marketing of the Hub**, Hub services and the impact of joint work at the country, regional and global levels.

Create and manage a **technical roster**, to speed up the process of hiring consultants.

Consider **institutionalizing the Hub as a continuing service** to country offices and regional bureaus.