UNDP and UNHCR are launching a collaborative framework for joined-up programming that supports the protection, inclusion, recovery, durable solutions and social cohesion of people and communities across Ukraine. The framework is intended to model a nexus approach to secure the fastest possible transition from humanitarian assistance to longer-term processes of recovery and development.

By aligning and ‘joining-up’ relevant UNDP and UNHCR programmes and advocacy efforts, it is envisioned that synergies gained from a HDP-nexus and multi-sectoral approach will increase the positive impact of programmes on the lives of individuals at community level. ‘Horizontal’ assistance of area-based approaches will be complemented by, and integrated with, ‘vertical’ assistance from local components of UNHCR’s and UNDP’s national and sectoral programmes.

The principal objective is durable solutions for IDPs and returning refugees. Securing this objective requires assistance to IDP host communities and to the newly liberated and former frontline areas to which people wish to return. Building on a number of pilots undertaken in 2023, the Agencies will now scale up joint working to 14 target Oblasts – Chernihiv, Sumy, Poltava, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Vinnytsia, Zakarpattia and Lviv.

The collaboration addresses barriers to IDP inclusion and integration as well as the five key impediments to return as consistently highlighted by IDPs and refugees themselves in UNHCR’s regular Surveys: physical security; housing status; access to services; livelihood opportunities and emerging concerns regarding potential social cohesion challenges as reintegration and returns increase to local contexts characterized by economic scarcity, overstretched services, protection challenges and significant destruction. UNHCR’s approach to durable solutions involves mainstreaming protection across sectors, so that barriers to inclusion are addressed and people are able to access rights equally in a barrier-free society. UNDP’s development approach is rooted in building capacities of Government for service provision and transition from humanitarian assistance. Both Agencies are committed to inclusive and participatory methodologies, and to delivering on the key promise of the 2030 Agenda, that no-one is left behind.

Under the framework, UNHCR and UNDP will work to ensure that government crisis management and recovery planning are evidence-based and data-informed. All data will be suitably disaggregated according to age, gender and specific needs, focused on three main areas: 1) UNDP war damage assessments, to the level of individual buildings, and the UNHCR/shelter Cluster SIDAR database of damaged residential units and assistance provided to repairs by humanitarian shelter actors; 2) UNHCR data on protection needs, including of IDPs in long-term displacement, and on IDP and refugee return intentions; 3) SHARP/SCORE data for social cohesion, to be augmented by a new joint UNDP/UNHCR system of tension monitoring for more granular reading of inclusion and cohesion at community level.

The proposed collaboration is rooted in the UNDP and UNHCR Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions (2023-2025), which provides a platform for both agencies to bring their comparative advantages to areas were working together can deliver better results in responding to humanitarian crises and challenges. The Framework is fully aligned with UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) and the recent UNDP Crisis Offer, as well as the UNHCR Strategic Directions (2022-2026). It is also aligned with key priorities of the Government of Ukraine, the 2024 UN Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and the forthcoming 2025-2029 UNSDCF, coherent and coordinated with the work of other UN actors, IFIs and NGOs to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.
UNDP-UNHCR “Joined-Up” Programming

Protection and Public Safety

The first imperative of the collaboration is to ensure the highest possible standards of protection for individuals and public safety for communities. UNHCR protection services at the border will be reinforced, including capacity development support to the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine to enable the return of refugees in safety and dignity, and will be complemented by UNDP capacity development for, inter alia, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU) and National Police of Ukraine (NPU), for provision of public information and life-saving rescue services. UNDP will work to ensure that war debris, unstable buildings and explosive remnants of war are cleared to provide humanitarian access and that other immediate environmental threats are identified and contained or neutralized as appropriate to enhance the repair of damaged houses by UNHCR. UNDP and UNHCR will work to ensure that participatory approaches inform decisionmaking and prioritization at local level, building upon existing community-based networks and official structures, such as Community Security Working Groups and IDP councils.

Housing Needs

The repair and reconstruction of destroyed or damaged homes is one of the top priorities expressed by people displaced due to the war – and a crucial factor for their ability to return in a dignified and sustainable way. In addition, existing housing stock needs to be renovated for re-settlement of IDPs currently living in collective centres, and for refugees unable to return to their communities of origin. In war-affected areas, UNHCR will meet shelter needs through the provision of immediate emergency shelter support packages, housing repairs, the provision of modular homes, and minor repairs to apartment blocks. UNDP will organize more substantial repairs of apartment blocks through the Government of Ukraine’s United 24 initiative and by targeting and providing technical assistance to IFI lending programs. Funding is required only to identify and bring apartment owners together, and to offer a scheme for owners to lease apartments for a set period to others should they not wish to return themselves.

Access to Services

UNHCR will scale up the provision of legal aid and support with civil status and housing, land and property (HLP) documentation. In parallel, in addition to its work to strengthen capacities of the Free Legal Aid Service (FLAS), UNDP will continue its programme to reconstruct and refurbish Administrative Service Centres (TsNAPs) in war-affected areas and extend an existing fleet of mobile service units offering a broad range of administrative services for social protection, pension, identity documents, registration of transport, as well as legal, medical, personal care and information services.

Schools, health centres, social services facilities, municipal buildings, local bridges etc., are all minimum requirements to make war-affected areas liveable again and to enable sustainable return and resumption of economic activity. In IDP-hosting areas, social infrastructure needs to be extended or refurbished to meet increased numbers of service users. While UNDP will facilitate IFI lending for reconstruction of larger-scale objects, smaller-scale social infrastructure needs will need to be met through grants for the speed and flexibility necessary to underpin returns processes. Small-scale works to be undertaken will be selected via community participation and prioritization.

Livelihood Opportunities

Sustainable return is indelibly linked to employment or entrepreneurialism. Current social protection entitlements – which often serve as a crucial bridge to economic recovery and self-reliance may fall short for IDPs in the mid-term, as their savings diminish, and the lack of immediate job prospects hinders their integration and sustainable return, particularly among IDPs no longer eligible for displacement benefits. UNHCR engages with employment agencies, organises job fairs, and referral to TVET opportunities focused on IDPs and refugee returnees. UNDP will complement this with a broader programme of support to establish an enabling environment for business at local level, assistance to MSMEs in entrepreneurship, business development, and e-commerce, TVET reform to better match workforce supply to employer demand, and active labour market programmes to increase the labour market participation rate of women and vulnerable groups, including veterans people with disabilities, and minority communities such as the Roma.

Community Inclusion, Participation & Social Cohesion

UNDP and UNHCR are already working to bolster social cohesion and trust and enhance the resilience of war-affected communities and hosting areas. Following the successful joint development of the Mukachevo Community Inclusion Hub, additional hubs will be established along with community-led platforms for dialogue and conflict identification/resolution according to tested approaches, tailored to the recovery-development needs of specific geographical areas. The Agencies will synchronize their initiatives to amplify the role of civil society in shaping, executing, and monitoring protection and recovery efforts, and will deliver targeted capacity enhancement modules enabling activists to meaningfully engage in the advocacy for, and monitoring of, resources allocated to local recovery projects. Tangible support will be provided to CSOs to build their organizational capacity to act as advocates for the rights of the marginalized, to promote good governance and inclusivity and to pilot innovative social entrepreneurship models.