



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/039

Audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The National Office needed to reinforce its organizational structure and resource planning to effectively deliver its strategic objectives

25 August 2022

Assignment No. AR2021-141-02

Audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The objective of the audit was to assess whether the National Office in the Philippines was managing the delivery of services to Persons of Concern (PoCs) in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with UNHCR policy requirements. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 September 2021 and included (a) organizational structure and Bureau support to the National Office; (b) programme planning, monitoring and reporting; and (c) durable solutions.

As part of the Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific (the Bureau) long-term strategy to disengage and eventually phase out service delivery to PoCs and instead focus on advocacy and capacity building of national asylum systems in the Philippines, UNHCR successfully transitioned the Representation to a National Office in January 2021. However, the new Office structure and resourcing model was inadequate in supporting UNHCR's strategic direction in the Philippines since the National Office continued to have an active role in delivering services to PoCs.

OIOS made three recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNHCR needed to:

- Implement the appropriate structure, resources and support required for effective service delivery to PoCs by the National Office;
- Reinforce its strategic direction by developing a multi-year strategy, aligning resource allocation to identified PoC priorities, strengthening the performance management of its programmes and verifying PoC numbers used for its planning and decision making; and
- Implement an action plan to address the refugee status determination backlog and strengthen its local integration programme; and develop Government's capacity to lead, better coordinate and take over the internally displaced persons' response.

UNHCR accepted the recommendations, implemented one, and initiated action to implement the other two.

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Audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
2. The Philippines acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol and was the first country in the South-East Asia region to ratify the 1954 Statelessness Convention. The Philippines also recently acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. As of December 2021, the Philippines hosted 1,429 refugees and asylum seekers, 19 and 14 per cent of whom were from the Syrian Arab Republic and Pakistan respectively and the rest from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, Gaza, Iraq and Somalia. The country had 277,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 13 stateless persons and another 128,865 persons at risk of statelessness.
3. UNHCR established its presence in the Philippines as a Representation in 1975. It transitioned from a Representation into a national office (hereinafter referred to as the National Office) in January 2021. The National Office's primary role was advocacy on protection matters and capacity-building of national asylum systems. The National Office also: (i) responded to the IDP needs in Mindanao; (ii) prevented and reduced statelessness through legislative advocacy and supporting persons of concern (PoCs) access to birth certificates and naturalization processes; and (iii) implemented the emergency transit mechanism that temporarily hosted refugees at risk of refoulement during their resettlement process.
4. The nationalization of the operation resulted in the gradual phasing out of all professional positions by 1 January 2021. The National Office was headed by a national professional officer at level C, reporting to the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. At the time of the audit, the Office had 26 staff (six National Officers and 20 General Service positions). It also had four temporary positions (two of which were vacant) and 14 affiliate positions. The National Office was based in Manila, and had a field office in Cotabato, Mindanao. It worked with eight and nine partners in 2020 and 2021, who implemented 52 and 48 per cent of the operating level budget respectively.
5. The National Office had an operating level budget of \$3.3 and \$3.0 million in 2020 and 2021 respectively, 56 per cent of which was spent on operations and 44 per cent on staff and administration costs. About 70 per cent of the programme budget was spent on IDPs.
6. Comments provided by UNHCR are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess whether the National Office in the Philippines was managing the delivery of services to PoCs in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with UNHCR policy requirements.
8. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risks associated with nationalization of the operation in the Philippines, which was finalized in 2021.
9. OIOS conducted this audit from December 2021 to March 2022. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 September 2021. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher

and medium risks areas, namely: (a) organizational structure and Bureau support to the National Office; (b) programme planning, monitoring, and reporting; and (c) durable solutions.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel, (b) review of relevant documentation, (c) analytical review of data, including financial data from Managing for Systems, Resources and People (MSRP), the UNHCR enterprise resource planning system, and performance data from FOCUS, the UNHCR results-based management system; and (d) sample testing of controls. The audit was conducted remotely due to travel restrictions occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Organizational structure and Bureau support to the National Office

Need to review the Office's organisational structure and resource requirements for effective delivery of its mandate

12. UNHCR national offices are typically set up when there is a low number of PoCs in de-facto locally integrated situations. However, the National Office's activities went beyond its defined roles of advocacy and capacity building of national asylum systems and provided services to PoCs, thus stretching its capacity. The Office was dealing with a relatively large number of PoCs (1,429 refugees and asylum seekers, 277,000 IDPs, and 128,865 stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness).

13. The UNHCR's resource allocation framework did not cover national offices and thus did not provide guidance on National Office staff responsibilities, accountabilities, and level of delegated authority. While a Letter of Instruction from the Bureau defined the authority delegated to the head of the National Office, it was silent on the delegated authority to the Field Office that delivered services to IDPs and accounted for 70 per cent of the programme budget. Also, the head of National Office's job description did not reflect expected new roles and the new reporting line to the Bureau; the latter was only reflected in the performance management system. Therefore, there was a need to clarify staff roles and responsibilities for the National Office.

14. Per UNHCR guidance in June 2021, national offices fall under the auspices of a multi-country office. However, due to geopolitical reasons, UNHCR decided that the National Office's reporting line would be to the Head of Protection Service in the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. The audit noted that the support to be provided by the Bureau was not formalized and was ad-hoc and limited. For instance, the Bureau's multi-functional team did not provide technical support to the National Office on key thematic areas nor systematically monitor the work of implementing partners. Therefore, the Bureau and the National Office needed to formalize their relationship.

15. By virtue of its working with IDPs, the National Office was expected to lead the protection cluster and work with other agencies under the United Nations cluster system. This accountability framework did not make provision for national officers to engage the United Nations Country Team and thus could not be implemented. This was because the Head of the National Office was not UNHCR's accredited Representative to the Philippines and no arrangement had been made at the Bureau level for someone to take formal responsibility for this role, which was especially important for the IDP operations. The Bureau explained that while the framework and policy documents did not make such provisions, UNHCR

management had deemed the National Office fit to fulfil this role. However, this had not yet been formalized and appropriately communicated to key stakeholders.

16. The Bureau deployed a senior human resources officer to review the staffing structure of the National Office, but this was limited in scope and only covered the affiliate workforce, human resource and administrative functions. The National Office had not yet implemented recommendations arising from this review, i.e., the need to: (i) conduct an evaluation of resources and skills needed for other functional areas vis-à-vis the organization's benchmarks; and (ii) address duplications identified between administration, human resources and supply functions, including assessing the volume of work related to some positions in these three functions.

17. The matters raised above regarding the National Office's structure and delegated authority, staffing and resources, and support arrangements impacted its ability to effectively execute its mandate, as noted in Sections B to C below.

(1) The Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific should support the National Office in the Philippines in implementing its mandate by: (i) clarifying its structure and resource requirements for effective service delivery; and (ii) formally defining its staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and its relationship with the Bureau.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it has now completed the plan for restructuring its presence in the Philippines including closure of the Field Office, and that the National Office structure, staffing and resource allocation were part of the 2023-2027 multi-year strategy for the Philippines Operation. Additionally, the effectiveness of the setup of the staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities both at the Bureau and at the National Office would be monitored and further updated, where necessary. Based on the evidence submitted, Recommendation 1 has been closed.

B. Programme planning, monitoring, and reporting

Need to strengthen the National Office's strategic and operational planning processes

Strategic and operational planning

18. The Representation's limited resources called for strengthened strategic planning to support their prioritization amongst the many PoC needs. However, the National Office did not have a multi-year multi-partner strategy to direct its operations. In accordance with UNHCR's June 2021 guidance, a multi-country office (to which a national office would normally report) should take the lead in developing such a strategy. In the absence of this structure, it should fall on the Bureau to lead and assist in developing the Office's strategic direction. This process would bring key stakeholders together, such as the Government, development partners, other United Nations agencies and international organizations, to facilitate refugees and asylum seekers' access to durable solutions. It would also support the National Office in phasing out service delivery especially to IDPs, where it should be an implementor of last resort.

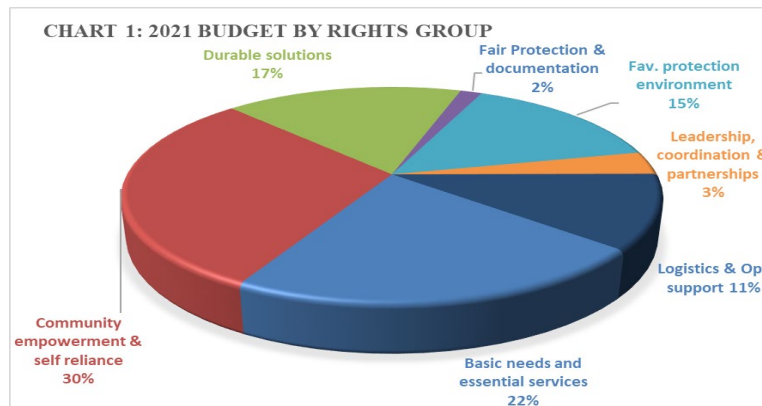
19. The National Office did not conduct participatory assessments to inform the prioritization of refugee protection needs nor situational analyses to inform its planned handover of IDP responsibilities to the Government. Further, it lacked comprehensive PoC data to inform its strategic and operational planning and decision-making processes. The National Office had access to IDP data from various sources, but the data was not harmonized nor was it disaggregated by age and gender. For stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness, the National Office relied on information from a 2010 population census that was outdated and limited in scope. The Bureau explained that relying on this data was unavoidable, since the

National Office was required to only use Government data on statelessness. In accordance with its defined role, the National Office should advocate and support the updating of data.

20. In the Philippines there has been a high number of displacements of persons over the years due to natural disasters and armed conflicts. The National Office’s risk register had rated displacement of persons as a high risk due to its likelihood and major impact. However, the National Office had not, as part of its annual planning process, developed mitigating measures such as an emergency preparedness plan. The National Office attributed its limited emergency preparedness to the lack of resources. Thus, the Office was not adequately prepared to respond effectively in the event of a crisis that resulted in displacement of persons.

Resource allocation

21. The National Office operated in a complex operating environment characterized by multiple displacements of persons within the country and limited durable solutions for PoCs. Despite its limited resources, the aforementioned limitations in its structure and capacity and a mandate that should have been largely advocacy and capacity building, the National Office remained largely responsible for delivering services to PoCs as reflected in chart 1.



22. In planning its programmes and allocating resources, the National Office did not prioritize areas of strategic importance. For instance, 22 per cent of the budget was allocated to basic needs and essential services yet it was not a strategic priority, whereas only nine per cent was allocated to statelessness which was of strategic importance. The National Office’s allocation of budgets among PoCs was also not aligned to its defined priority groups, with the statelessness, refugees and asylum seekers being allocated 16 per cent of the budget and the IDPs that should be managed under the cluster system having 74 per cent.

23. The National Office worked with nine partners to implement its programmes, with six partners having budgets below \$100,000. This was inefficient since each partner claimed administrative expenses. The National Office explained that this was necessitated by the operating environment and geographical distribution of IDPs.

Risk and performance management

24. The audit identified inconsistencies in the National Office’s performance data recorded against indicators and targets in FOCUS. This affected the reliability of data available for planning and decision-making. For instance, in 2020, it set the target for elderly PoCs with specific needs to receive cash-based-interventions at 100 per cent against a baseline of 16 per cent, which it had not reached in the previous year. Furthermore, the National Office did not analyse reasons for non-performance nor take appropriate action

to address it. For instance, while no stateless persons and refugees were naturalized by the Government in 2021, the targets were not adjusted to reflect the factors that impacted the shortfalls. The shift to the new performance system, COMPASS, presented an opportunity to address these weaknesses.

25. At the time of the audit, the National Office’s risk register contained 10 high and 5 medium risks. However, the register did not reflect key risks impeding the achievement of its strategic priorities, including: (i) inadequate resources and capacity to implement its programmes; and (ii) limited progress in responding to statelessness. Also, the listed actions to mitigate the identified 15 risks remained unimplemented past their due dates, including those actions related to inadequate data and the disengagement from the IDP response. In several instances, mitigating actions had been implemented but the assessed risk remained high, which raised questions on the effectiveness of these actions. After the audit, UNHCR informed that the risk register was now complete and mitigating measures updated. UNHCR also informed OIOS that the National Office would regularly review the risk register and risk focal persons, treatment owners and managers would complete risk management trainings with the support of the Bureau. These actions satisfactorily address the abovementioned gaps identified by OIOS.

(2) The Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific should support the National Office in the Philippines to: (i) develop a multi-year solutions strategy; (ii) allocate resources in line with persons of concern (PoCs) priorities by conducting participatory assessments and situational analyses; and (iii) strengthen its performance management and validate PoCs data used for programming and decision making.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 2 and stated that an interim strategy plan was adopted for 2022 and a Multi-year Strategy Plan was developed for 2023-2027, which includes resources for conducting participatory assessments. Additionally, with the successful migration from FOCUS to COMPASS as the planning system applications, validation and technical issues on POC data were being addressed both at the country and regional levels.

C. Durable solutions

Need to prioritize local integration interventions as the main durable solution available for PoCs

26. Due to the reduction of UNHCR presence in the Philippines which led to transitioning from a Representation to a National Office, one strategic objective of UNHCR operations was to have PoCs locally integrated into national systems. Through advocacy, the National Office had over some years successfully advocated for changes in Government policies with: (i) the Philippine Supreme Court relaxing the country’s judicial requirements for naturalization and integration; (ii) the President directing that PoCs programmes are funded; and (iii) the Philippines acceding to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Further, the National Office started capacity building Government entities with the intention of handing over service delivery for IDPs to them.

27. While the National Office supported PoCs’ applications, and advocated for their increased access to national systems services, it failed to get nationality for any of its targeted 374 stateless persons of Indonesian descent in 2020 and managed only one in 2021. Additionally, the extent to which naturalization was availed to the other stateless category of persons remained unchanged at zero per cent. While the National Office attributed its low performance to inadequate funding, restrictions occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of interest among PoCs to undergo naturalization, it had not adjusted its targets to reflect these factors. The Government’s revision of the naturalization process which had previously been costly (\$2,500 per person) and lengthy (taking over five years) presented an opportunity to

meet prior year missed targets. Considering the challenges that PoCs were facing in the naturalization process, the Office needed to increase its focus on durable solutions.

28. At the time of the audit, the National Office’s primary focus was assisting IDPs, with 28 per cent spent on durable solutions. Of that 28 per cent, 16 per cent was spent on data gathering and profiling of IDPs and advocacy for a national IDP law, with only \$83,636 (12 per cent) allocated for durable solutions activities for refugees and persons facing statelessness. This 12 per cent was mainly disbursed on administrative expenses and staff salaries. Only 22 per cent was spent on durable solutions projects. There was a need, therefore, for the National Office to build the Government’s capacity to take over the IDP response and this would allow UNHCR to reallocate funds to finding durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers.

29. Resettlement opportunities for PoCs were limited. The National Office could not advocate for voluntary repatriation since most refugees could not safely return to their country of origin. Partner records showed that only five refugees voluntarily repatriated in the audit period. Therefore, local integration was the primary solution available for most refugees, but many did not consider it as their favourable choice. Moreover, backlogs in the refugee status determination process impacted PoCs’ access to local integration. At the end of 2021, the National Office had 542 asylum seekers waiting for their status to be determined. This was mainly because the Government had capacity issues and relied on support from the National Office to clear the backlog, but the Office did not have the resources (funding or staffing) to provide this.

30. While the National Office was unable to meet its naturalization targets, this was expected to improve due to the changes in regulations and policies issued in 2022 that institutionalized provision of services to PoCs. The National Office’s inability to meet the targets for assisting persons of concern get a durable solution was attributed to its capacity limitations and COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

(3) The National Office in the Philippines should implement an action plan to strengthen its local integration programme that (i) addresses persons of concern’s limited interest in being locally integrated; (ii) addresses the refugee status determination backlog; and (iii) develops the Government’s capacity to lead, coordinate and take over the internally displaced persons response.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would: (i) develop a durable solutions strategy, conduct capacity development workshops for focal agencies on Facilitated Naturalization and provide legal advice to individual cases; (ii) prioritize capacity development for the Department of Justice, develop a workplan addressing determination backlog, support data harmonization and clean-up, and contribute to integration of protection learning modules in the Government; (iii) conduct an IDP durable solutions action planning workshop and a training of trainers on protection mainstreaming; and contribute to the implementation of the Secretary General’s Action Agenda on IDPs.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

31. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNHCR for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

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Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	The Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific should support the National Office in the Philippines in implementing its mandate by: (i) clarifying its structure and resource requirements for effective service delivery; and (ii) formally defining its staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and its relationship with the Bureau.	Important	C	Recommendation is closed	Implemented
2	The Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific should support the National Office in the Philippines to: (i) develop a multi-year solutions strategy; (ii) allocate resources in line with persons of concern (PoCs) priorities by conducting participatory assessments and situational analyses; and (iii) strengthen its performance management and validate PoCs data used for programming and decision making.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of: (i) operationalization of the multi-year strategy in line with the participatory assessments to be conducted; and (ii) strengthened performance management and validating PoCs data.	31 December 2022
3	The National Office in the Philippines should implement an action plan to strengthen its local integration programme that (i) addresses persons of concern's limited interest in being locally integrated; (ii) addresses the refugee status determination backlog; and (iii) develops the Government's capacity to lead, coordinate and take over the internally displaced persons response.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of a durable solutions strategy that includes its plans to address the: (i) the limited interest of PoCs' in local integration; (ii) refugee status determination backlogs; and (iii) the Government's capacity to lead, coordinate and eventually take over the IDP response.	31 December 2023

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNHCR in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of the operations in the Philippines for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	UNHCR comments
1	The Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific should support the National Office in the Philippines in implementing its mandate by: (i) clarifying its structure and resource requirements for effective service delivery; and (ii) formally defining its staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and its relationship with the Bureau.	Important	Yes	RBAP: Bureau Director National Office: Head of National Office	Immediate (The Bureau considers this recommendation has been implemented.)	In the absence of applicable, explicit reference to a National Office in the current version of the Resource Allocation Framework, the Regional Bureau issued a “Delegation of authorities to the Head of National Office UNHCR Philippines” (dated 3 February 2021) providing for delegation of financial and other authorities, with a view to enable the National Office to operate effectively. (i) On the above backdrop, UNHCR has completed the plan for restructuring of its presence in the Philippines, including the closure of the Field Office in Cotabato (slated at the end of 2022), that will take effect in the beginning of 2023. To facilitate this process, the Regional Bureau fielded a joint mission (protection, programme/project control, risk management, human resources) mission to the Philippines (late May-early June 2022). The outcome of this mission forms the basis for Bureau’s further support to the National Office.

⁵ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁶ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	UNHCR comments
						<p>Since the relocation and restructuring of the Regional Bureau in mid-2019 (under the framework of the Decentralization and Regionalization scheme), the structural and resource requirements of the National Office has been determined through direct consultations between the National Office and the Regional Bureau, the outcome of which are reflected in the 2022 interim (i.e. annual) strategy plan. A similar process has been conducted for 2023-2027 multi-year strategy planning and is being conducted for 2023 ‘Get Results’ (operational/ budgetary) planning. Narratives on the National Office staffing structure as of 2023, as well as resource (2023 OP budget) overview sorted along the results framework are found in “Section 4 “Resources” of the multi-year strategy plan.</p> <p>(ii) Roles and responsibilities of the National Office staff as from 2023 are outlined in Section 4 of the 2023-2027 Multi-year Strategy Plan. Effectiveness of the setup of the Staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities both at RBAP and National Office shall be monitored, and further updated as required along the evolving situation on the ground.</p>
2	The Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific should support the National Office in the	Important	Yes	RBAP: Head of Strategic	Q4 of 2022	(i) In the transition phase of the new RBM and COMPASS rollout, 2022

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	UNHCR comments
	Philippines to: (i) develop a multi-year solutions strategy; (ii) allocate resources in line with persons of concern (PoCs) priorities by conducting participatory assessments and situational analyses; and (iii) strengthen its performance management and validate PoCs data used for programming and decision making.			Planning and Management Service National Office: Planning Coordinator		<p>operations in the Philippines has been covered by an interim (i.e., annual) Strategy Plan. For the period 2023-2027, a Multi-year Strategy Plan was developed for the operation in close consultation and collaboration with and under the supervision of the Regional Bureau. Multi-year solutions strategy is integrated in this strategic plan (“Protection and Solutions” section under “Situation Analysis” section in particular, and reflected throughout the plan document at various levels.</p> <p>(ii) While the OP budget for 2023 was developed on the basis of the finding of the participatory needs assessment conducted earlier, the multi-year plan submitted by UNHCR Philippines for planning period 2023-2027 already includes resources allocated to participatory assessments ensuring that POC needs are well prioritized (see also 3 (i) below) and will be modified as required during periodic reviews. Detailed 2023 OP budget table is sorted by budget type (ABOD/OPS/STAFF; location; Pillar-PoC type), with the columns Q, X and AB respectively indicating “long descriptions” of Impact Areas, Outcome Areas, and Output Statements as guide for prioritized needs. In this way, the table would show linkage between the budgeted</p>

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						<p>amounts, PoCs and the results frame work.</p> <p>(iii) With the successful migration from FOCUS to COMPASS as the planning system application and the participatory assessments conducted in April 2022 (see also 3(i) below), validation and technical issues on POC data are being addressed for a more responsive programming and decision making both at the country and regional levels.</p>
3	<p>The National Office in the Philippines should implement an action plan to strengthen its local integration programme that (i) addresses persons of concern's limited interest in being locally integrated; (ii) addresses the refugee status determination backlog; and (iii) develops the Government's capacity to lead, coordinate and take over the internally displaced persons response.</p>	Important	Yes	<p>(i) Sr. Protection Associate (ii) Sr. Protection Associate (iii) Head of Field Office; Asst Protection Officer</p>	<p>(i) Q4 of 2022 (ii) Q4 of 2023 (iii) a. Q4 of 2022 (iii)-b. Q3 of 2023</p>	<p>(i) Following the Participatory Needs Assessment conducted in April 2022, one of the action points identified was to continue the rollout of information sessions for newly recognized refugees to inform them of their rights and obligations and options for local integration in the Philippines to address the information gap that was raised among POC. Conducted at least twice every year with the support of UNHCR's project partner and resource persons from the Government, the programme may be strengthened to include recognized refugees in previous years who are interested in obtaining updated information on the existing services available to them, including a separate/dedicated orientation on naturalization to interested POC. This is on-going with one orientation for newly recognized refugees already</p>

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						<p>completed on 28 July by a project partner, which was attended by 10 refugees and resource persons from the government. This session already incorporated an information roll-out for refugees and asylum seekers on the new rule on facilitated naturalization. Meanwhile, on 19 May 2022 an orientation on the key features of the Naturalization Rule hosted by a POC-led organization, wherein 23 refugees participated. Resource persons were the partner's Legal Officer and a volunteer lawyer.</p> <p>Another information session on facilitated naturalization will be conducted for refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons in the 4th quarter of 2022, with a view of also conducting an intent survey on durable solutions together with the Government within the year. The Legal Officer of UNHCR's project partner CFSI will also continue providing legal advice to individual cases seeking further guidance or information on the naturalization procedures.</p> <p>Following the issuance of the Rule on Facilitated Naturalization, resources have also been allocated to conduct a capacity development workshop for focal agencies to be engaged in the roll-out of the Rule in Quarter 4 of 2022 (November) to ensure its</p>

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	UNHCR comments
						<p>effective implementation beginning 2023.</p> <p>(ii) To address the issue on case backlogs, capacity development sessions will also be prioritized for the DOJ beginning Quarter 1 of 2023, including thematic sessions on the RSD process, conflict of interest, interviewing techniques, decision writing, and data management. These trainings target the newly appointed Protection Offices, Senior Protection Officers, as well as administrative staff of the Department of Justice to ensure efficient management of cases. These activities will build on the existing support being extended by UNHCR, including data clean up and harmonization, development of data sharing agreements, data migration, as well as the conduct of trainings to ensure the continuous capacity development of Protection Officers and Administrative Staff. UNHCR will work with the Government to develop a workplan addressing determination backlog to be implemented throughout 2023, and a series of thematic trainings by the first to second quarter of 2023.</p> <p>UNHCR will continue supporting the data harmonization and clean-up of the Department of Justice until Quarter 4 of 2023, in order to have a clear picture of the actual refugee</p>

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						<p>caseload of the Government. This is on-going with five training sessions on proGres application conducted between 2021 to 2022, and quarterly data harmonization meetings conducted with government partners beginning 2020 and continuing on to 2022.</p> <p>For long-term impact, beginning Quarter 1 of 2023, UNHCR will contribute to ensure integration of protection learning modules to the Government's institutional capacity building unit. Trainings are on-going for relevant offices to ensure integration of protection learning modules to the government's institutional capacity building unit, such as the Philippine National Police, which was attended by 71 participants on 28 July 2022; Bureau of Immigration, which was attended by 32 participants on 11 July 2022; and the University of the Philippines National College on Public Administration and Governance, which was attended by 47 participants on 17 June 2022.</p> <p>(iii) a. An IDP Durable Solutions Action Planning Workshop was conducted on 2-3 August 2022 for Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) region to assess the residual protection needs of IDPs in protracted situation. This</p>

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						<p>action planning workshop was informed by the results of the IDP Forum which happened in July, participated in by IDPs in BARMM. The rest of the regions in Mindanao will follow in Quarter 4 (October-November) after securing the commitment from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at the national level.</p> <p>UNHCR will also continue to contribute to the discussion within the UN Country Team under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator as regards the implementation of the Secretary General's Action Agenda on IDPs. This is also ongoing through the Head of National Office's active participation in relevant coordination meetings. UNHCR recently provided a joint briefing before the UNCT and HCT on durable solutions initiatives on IDPs. On 4 August 2022, the RC/HC convened a joint UNCT/HCT meeting to present the SG Action Agenda on IDPs and obtain collective support among the stakeholders in implementing the objectives towards durable solutions. UNHCR was given the task to present its work on IDPs and its initiatives on advocating for the IDP domestic legislation; and its support to the regional government towards drafting of durable solutions</p>

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	UNHCR comments
						<p>strategy for BARMM's protracted IDPs.</p> <p>A Training of Trainers (TOT) on protection mainstreaming and information management was conducted in June 2022 targeting protection actors in the BARMM region was already conducted in June 2022. The second batch of the TOT will be conducted in Quarter 1 2023 pending agreement with the DSWD at the national level. Also, as part of knowledge sharing and transfer, the Field Office is organizing series of write shops on protection monitoring, durable solutions, cluster coordination with protection actors in Mindanao by Quarter 4 of 2022</p> <p>(iii)-b. For long-term impact, beginning Quarter 1 of 2023, UNHCR will contribute to ensuring integration of protection learning modules to the Government's institutional capacity building unit.</p>