



OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

# **Evaluation of OHCHR's Emergency Response Teams Programme 2017 - 2022**

## **Evaluation Report**

**October 2022**

**Conor Foley  
Joaquin de la Concha**

External Consultants have prepared this report. The views expressed herein are those of the Consultants and therefore do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of OHCHR.

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## Table of Acronyms

A4P	Action for Peace
AGS	Assistant General Secretary
APF	Asia Pacific Forum
AU	African Union
C5	UN Budget and Programs Committee
CAR	Central Africa Republic
CARO	Central Africa Regional Office
CCA	Common Country Assessment
COP	Community of Practice
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CRD	Crisis Risk Dashboard
CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCO	UN Development Coordination Office
DPO	UN Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	UN Department of Peacekeeping and Political Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary General
ESCR	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERS	Emergency Response Section
ERTs	Emergency Response Teams
FBS	Finance and Budget Section
FOTCD	Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division
FP	Field Presence
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
GFP	Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and Other Crisis Situations
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPC	Global Protection Cluster
HQ	Headquarters
HAU	Humanitarian Action Unit
HRA	Human Rights Advisor
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HRC	UN Human Rights Council
HRDDP	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
HRUF	Human Rights Up Front
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IBC	Issue-Based Coalition on Building Resilience,
ICC	International Criminal Court
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	Information Management Officer
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IT	Information technologies
JCSC	Justice and Corrections Section Standing Capacity
JRR	Justice Rapid Response

LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARA	Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Arrangements
MENO	Middle East and Northern African
METS	Methodology, Education and Training Section
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NIRMS	National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMP	OHCHR Management Plan
OROSLI	Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions
P5	Five Permanent Member States of the UN Security Council
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PDA	Peace and Development Advisors
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessments
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
PMSS	Peace Missions Support Section
POC	Protection of Civilians
PPMES	Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service
PSPS	Prevention and Sustaining Peace Section
PWGs	Protection Working Groups
RAPU	Risk Analysis and Prevention Unit
RC	Resident Coordinator
RMR	Regional Monthly Review
ROCA	Regional Office for Central America
ROSA	Regional Office for Southern America
SDCF	Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SARO	Southern Africa Regional Office
SEARO	Southeast Asia Regional Office
SGBV	Sexual Gender-based Violence
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPM	Special Political Mission
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SWPAs	Senior Women's Protection Advisor
TESPRDD	Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division
TOE	UN Team of Experts on Conflict Related Sexual Violence
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UN AFPs	United Nations Agencies, Funds, and Programs
UN ASG	UN Assistant Secretary General
UNCTs	UN Country Teams
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Frameworks
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHRC	UN Human Rights Council

UNICEF	UN Children Fund
UNOCC	UN Operations and Crisis Centre
UNOHCR	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNOPS	UN Operations Services
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WARO	West Africa Regional Office
WFP	World Food Programme



## Executive Summary

### Background

The Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) were created in 2017 and are located within its Regional Offices (ROs). The ERTs were originally designed to respond to the need of OHCHR for Early Warning and Early Action through three main strands of activity:

- The predictable production of human rights risk analyses for UN Field Presences (FPs) and OHCHR headquarters (HQ) to identify trends that could lead to conflict or serious violations and to establish the basis for timely, targeted, preventive action.
- Working with humanitarian actors to ensure that their responses are informed by a human rights-based analysis.
- Providing capacity to help OHCHR offer a swift response in relation to potential, emerging or actual human rights crises.

ERTs are composed of a Human Rights Officer (HRO) and an Information Management Officer (IMO). The HRO acts as focal point on early warning analysis, emergency response and humanitarian action, while the IMO leverages information management best practices, geo-spatial data and digital technology, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and visualization, monitoring and analysis tools and social media networks, to complement analytical data. Currently, ERTs are located in the ROs in West Africa (WARO, Dakar, Senegal), Southern Africa (SARO, Pretoria, South Africa), Southeast Asia (SEARO, Bangkok, Thailand), Central America (ROCA, Panama City, Panama), South America (ROSA, Santiago, Chile) and Central Africa Sub-regional Centre (CARO, Yaoundé, Cameroon).

### Methodology

This evaluation was conducted between May and October 2022 by two independent evaluators who were contracted respectively for 45 and 60 days, working under the supervision of an Evaluation Manager and the guidance of a Reference Group composed of OHCHR staff. The evaluation is based on information collected from semi-structured interviews with 75 informants – 57 of whom were OHCHR staff and 18 external stakeholders – selected through a convenient sampling approach (39 females and 36 males, distributed across all hierarchical levels). The interviewees were drawn from the six regions being covered by the ERTs with a minimum of five informants per region plus headquarters (HQ) in both the Geneva and New York offices. Other data collection methods included direct observation during a Community of Practice (COP) held in Geneva as well as a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 12 members of the ERTs held in Geneva and an online questionnaire that was completed by five out of six ERTs. The evaluation team also drew on OHCHR's grey literature' (reports, evaluations, policy

guidelines and directives, lessons-learned documents, minutes of meetings, etc.) and a secondary documentary analysis.

### **Main Findings**

The ERT programme is relevant to OHCHR's mandate, its OHCHR Management Plan (OMP) and internal prevention strategy as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Human Rights Up Front (HRUF), the Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights and the Prevention agenda. The evaluation team found considerable evidence that the ERTs have strengthened the capacity of OHCHR's ROs and FPs and the wider UN system to both anticipate and respond to human rights crises in ways that are extremely relevant to its work. The programme as it is being implemented is also relevant to the human rights situation in the regions. It aligns with and supports human rights related national and regional plans, programs and priorities of local stakeholders, partners, donors and other UN entities, including prevention mechanisms, taking into account OHCHR's comparative advantages. The ERTs provide a vehicle for OHCHR to promote both situational awareness and Early Warning, Early Action within the wider UN system at the field level, based on its recognized expertise as the world's leading entity on the promotion and protection of international human rights law (IHRL). This makes OHCHR well-placed to follow up on the normative recommendations of OHCHR, the UN's human rights treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council special procedures, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the expertise of its Geneva Secretariat, in particular the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division (TESPRDD).

The ERTs are deployed in regions whose countries span the spectrum from full-scale conflict to post-conflict, fragile and developing states. The size of the ROs to which ERTs are deployed varies dramatically as does the accessibility of the countries within the regions that they cover. The global reach of the programme is one of its strengths, but also means that each deployment takes place in a very different context. It is doubtful that a 'one size fits all' formulation could be designed to accommodate all such differences. The evaluation team believes, however, that OHCHR should develop a more standardized formulation, for deployments, prioritization and reporting which ensures a greater global consistency, in line with the result-based management approach required by the institution's OMP and donors. There is no need to over-bureaucratize these procedures as the flexibility of the current arrangements works well.

The ERTs are not designed to cover every violation of IHRL in every country in the regions where they are present. Their coverage and response capacity are also limited given the small size of the teams, the vast scope of the areas where they have been deployed and the seriousness of the conflicts and crises that they are monitoring. There are still several important regions of the world where crises are occurring that could lead to conflicts or serious violations of IHRL and international humanitarian law (IHL) and where the ERTs do not have an effective presence. As well as supporting OHCHR's own HQ and FPs, the ERTs are designed to complement and support the work of in-

country Human Rights Advisors (HRAs), Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) and gender advisors to Resident Coordinators (RCs), through the Development Coordination Office (DCO), UN Country Teams (UNCTs), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The priorities of each ERT, in each region, will largely be determined in consultation with these UN colleagues, under the direction of the Regional Representative, and the overall guidance of the head of OHCHR's Emergency Response Section (ERS).

The main 'added value' of the ERTs is that they strengthen the situational awareness of both OHCHR HQ and FPs through the predictable production of human rights risk analyses, to identify trends that could lead to human rights violations and conflict, and to establish the basis for timely, targeted, preventive action. This forecasting analytical power is backed by information management, networking and filling gaps in OHCHR FP capacity. New developments in information technologies (IT) have led to an exponential increase in the volume and types of data available at the field level. There has been a huge increase in demand for better data trend analysis from the Executive Office of the Secretary General (EOSG) and within the UN senior leadership. The ERTs are making a significant contribution to meeting this need. There are risks as well as opportunities associated with using non-traditional data sets and sources (including quality, coverage, provenance and construct validity), which requires experience and training. The ERTs would benefit from more consistent practice in assessing and using external data sets, as well as improved data governance to include these in the associated metadata. Within the COP the ERTs and relevant ERS colleagues are jointly working on standardization for assessing changes in risk profile in order to make clearer and more consistent links between trends, assessed risk and prevention efforts. The evaluation team believe that the ERTs can contribute to a shared OHCHR-wide approach to information and analysis systems, to maximize impact and use of resources in an increasingly results-focused manner.

The evaluation team find that the other two activities of the ERTs described in the programme documents – working with humanitarian actors and providing emergency response capacity to help OHCHR respond to actual or emerging human rights crises – have in practice received less priority in the ERT programme to date. Some differences were expressed by some interviewees about whether the ERTs really are an emergency response deployment mechanism, but these could not be triangulated by the evaluation team. The location of the ERTs in the ROs – with a line-reporting management to the Regional Representatives – is, however, clearly intended to strengthen the capacity of these offices to both anticipate and respond to human rights crises. The ERTs work within the nexus between humanitarian, peace and development actors, championing the principles of HRUF and the Prevention Platform and strengthening the capacity of UNCTs and RCs to carry out their own emergency response planning within the

framework provided by IHRL. Long standing ERT members have also developed an analytical know-how that merge the IMO and HRO set of skills in ways which strengthen the objectives of the programme.

Communication and coordination amongst the ERTs in the ROs and the ERS in Geneva and the Prevention and Sustaining Peace Section (PSPS) in New York have generally been good considering the rather fragmented, horizontal and overlapping structures that exist, both within OHCHR and in the wider UN system. The ERT Programme Coordinator provides effective dedicated support on programmatic issues, as well as ensuring regular exchanges of information are organized, within the programme and between it and ERS and OHCHR. The COP provides an extremely good forum to facilitate communication and coordination, promote discussion and exchange good practices. Improving the ERTs communication and coordination structures, nevertheless requires a holistic consideration of how OHCHR inter-relates with the rest of the UN system, which could, in turn, help to facilitate OHCHR's humanitarian engagement and capacity crisis response by alerting its own FPs and HQ as well as the wider UN system when this was necessary. The growing connection between the ERTs and OHCHR's embedded human rights capacity in the UNOCC has also helped to raise the profile of situations of concern for UNHQ decision-making through the work of the Human Rights Analyst. This has helped to leverage ERT analysis in the RMR process and represents a productive way by which OHCHR can use data-driven human rights analysis to better influence the rest of the UN system to undertake human rights-based preventive action.

The monitoring and evaluation system of the programme is run individually for each of the ERTs within their ROs together with the HQ and coordinated donor follow up reporting systems. In the first instance, the internal programme monitoring system appears adequate for measuring the work of ERTs on a wide array of outputs at process level that correctly reflect the nature of the programme. The fragmented nature of this system, which is contained in different RO programmatic documents and not summarized in an overall structure, however, does not provide the benefits of more standard monitoring schemes. This leads to disparities in terminologies, lack of homogeneity at different results level and non-optimal SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timetabled) adjustment of indicators including over reliance on qualitative indicators over quantitative measurements. The programme is currently in the process of shifting from the pilot test approach to a second phase where standardisation and common monitoring are being increasingly used.

The ERTs have been rolled out since 2017 on a regional basis and their achievements to date have been considerable despite some unforeseen circumstances of which the COVID19 pandemic was the most significant. The results show a good value for money programme where operational management and funds traceability is well ensured. Limited human resources have, however, constrained the potential effectiveness of the ERTs, despite their skills and added value. The evaluation team has nevertheless

identified several examples of where the ERTs have leveraged in-house resources to promote the prevention potential of OHCHR FPs.

The ERTs are a new programme for OHCHR. Some have only been in existence for less than a year and it is too early to prove their impact on the long-term enjoyment of human rights. The evaluation team believes, though, that the ERTs have considerable potential to make a significant contribution to improving the UN's own situational awareness and helping it respond more effectively to potential crises. By operationalizing the commitments that the UN adopted in the HRUF policy the programme is leveraging the Prevention agenda to enhance the broader protection and promotion of human rights. By promoting UN inter-entity cooperation and collaboration on early warning early action, the ERTs are helping to build a common information and analysis system within the UN from the field level up. While the ERTs have not developed a formal Theory of Change (ToC) or intervention logic the evaluation team did find evidence that the ERTs Outputs – in the form of reports, visuals, training events and seminars, and other forms of – networking are leading to tangible Outcomes that strengthen human rights. The evaluation team believe that achieving Impact will require the development of better monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems with basic indicators on results. The ERTs are contributing to the process that is helping to make OHCHR a more results-based and analytical organization. They can be considered as part of a long-term shift within OHCHR over recent decades in which it has moved away from its 'traditional' focus on servicing Geneva-based reporting mechanisms to a greater emphasis on achieving results in the field.

The ERTs have strengthened the capacity of the ROs to monitor and respond to human rights violations. They have also strengthened the work of some RCs, UNCTs HRAs and PDAs to monitor and respond to these violations at the field and HQ level in a sustainable manner. The evaluation team is concerned that the ERT programme in its current form is too fragmented and reliant on extra budgetary ear-marked support and a multiplicity of external donors. OHCHR needs to find a way of bringing the programme as a whole in-house and support it under its XB unearmarked core funding. The ERTs fundraising activity to date has been impressive. OHCHR should take a more ambitious approach to sustaining and expanding the programme, coordinating with and between donors to try to secure more flexible funding and resources and engage constructively with their efforts to promote reform in the broader UN system. The UN has moved away from financing large and costly peacekeeping operations (PKOs), in recent years, which has brought considerable financial savings. Investing only a fraction of those resources in human rights situational analysis, Early Warning, Early Action and Prevention could easily fund an initiative based on the ERT through UN inter-entity cooperation and collaboration.

The risk analysis produced by the ERTs, underpinned by Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and gender mainstreaming principles, have been used to raise awareness and facilitate

entry points to work with other UN agencies. These two principles are embedded in the general objective of the programme. Several workplans of ERTs also specifically include references to these processes. The ERTs have used LNOB principles as the main entry point for integrating human rights-based approach (HRBA) perspectives into planning and decision-making mechanisms of UN in the field. This could, however, be better reflected in reporting documents and measurement of results and indicators.

## **Conclusions**

The ERTs are an innovative development within the work of OHCHR, which potentially provide an important tool to promote reform within the broader UN system. By identifying trends, assessed risks and prevention efforts, they are helping to promote both situational awareness and Early Warning, Early Action within OHCHR. They are also encouraging greater UN inter-entity cooperation around the Prevention agenda at the field level, based on OHCHR's recognized expertise as the world's leading entity on the promotion and protection of IHRL. The ERTs have already made a significant contribution to a 'cultural change' in the work of OHCHR, reinforcing a long-term trend, as it becomes more field orientated and responsive to developing potential and actual human rights crises. They are also contributing to a process that is helping to make OHCHR a more results-based and analytical organization, with a greater emphasis on achieving results in the field. This evaluation makes a series of Recommendations for strengthening their work based on a continued expansion of the programme.

## **Summary Recommendations**

1. OHCHR should proactively coordinate with and between donors to continue to secure flexible funding and resources for the programme in all ROs. Further, OHCHR should consider increasing the scope of the ERTs to cover under-prioritized regions such as South Asia, and the Caribbean.
2. OHCHR should consolidate the ERT programme, acknowledging that ERTs represent a core function of its work at the regional level, through continued fundraising as well as complementing its XB unearmarked resources if necessary.
3. OHCHR should, in the context of strengthening its ROs through a regionalization process, consider including ERTs functions and posts in its UN Regular Budget submission.
4. OHCHR should continue to encourage UN inter-entity cooperation on Early Warning, Early Action through the work of the ERTs and further strengthen its cooperation on data collection, management and analysis with UNDP, DCO, OCHA, DPPA and other relevant actors.

5. OHCHR should work with its FP and HQ units, as well as the wider UN system, in particular the human rights capacity embedded within UNOCC to ensure that the work and role of the ERTs becomes increasingly known, so that ERT field staff are better recognized in its humanitarian engagement and capacity crisis response and their recommendations help to inform decisions about emergency deployments.
6. OHCHR should expand its information management capacity to build upon the success shown in the use of structured data, visualization, technical solutions and lessons learned in support of the ERT efforts to engage with partners in integrated analysis and improve situational awareness.
7. OHCHR should develop a more standardized formulation, for deployments, prioritization and reporting ERTs which ensures a greater global consistency, in line with the result-based management approach required by the institution's OMP and donors. This shall include quantified indicators for each ERT and visualization of results. This standardization should be understood as the first phase in the development of a programme theory of change for the programme.
8. OHCHR should produce a single consolidated report focused on the programme's objectives, Outcomes and Impact, presented in an analytical, results-oriented and more visually attractive manner to either supplement or replace individual narrative reports to donors on the activities and outputs of individual ERTs.
9. OHCHR should ensure that all needs assessments and M&E reports identify contextual specific barriers and strengths of women and vulnerable groups according to LNOB principles. Reporting documents should include gender-specific sections that can highlight and pinpoint actions and results in this area. The programme should also integrate LNOB principles into its measurement of results and indicators.

## I. Introduction

### **Project Background**

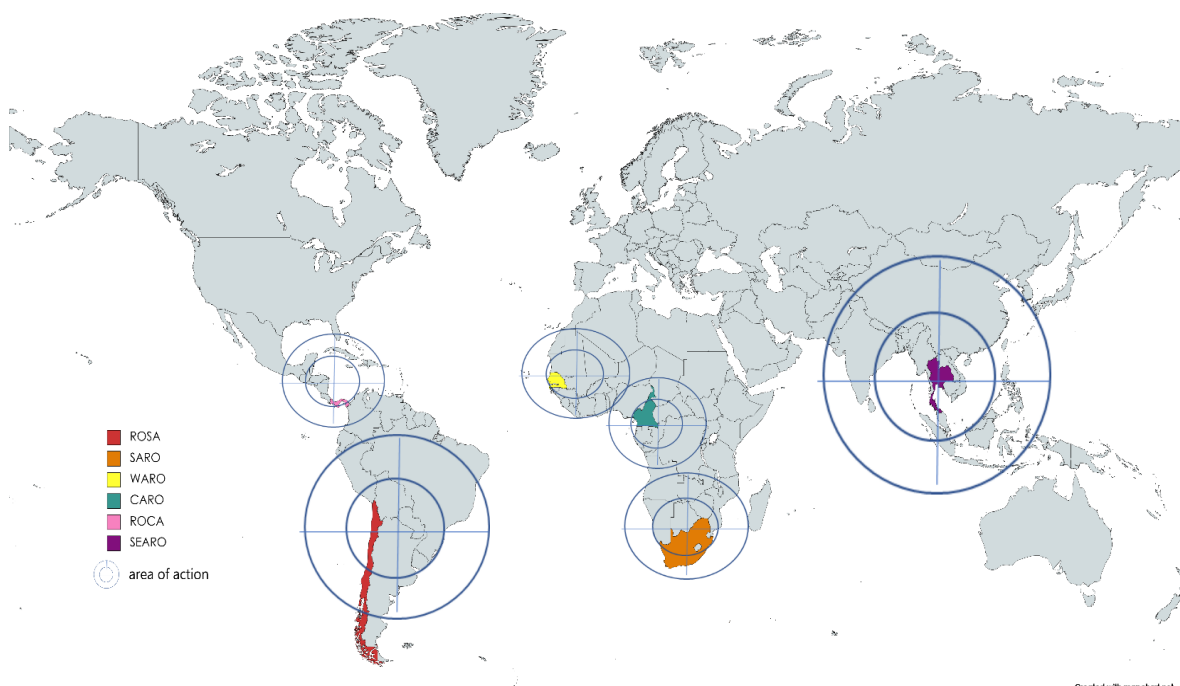
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- working with humanitarian actors to ensure that their responses are informed by a human rights-based analysis.
- providing capacity to help OHCHR offer a swift response in relation to potential, emerging or actual human rights crises.

OHCHR's Emergency Response Section (ERS) in Geneva provides programmatic and substantive support to the regional ERTs. The ERTs have a dual reporting line: to the head of the RO and to the head of ERS. The ERTs also work closely with OHCHR's Prevention and Sustaining Peace Section (PSPS) in New York as well as with other relevant sections. The ERS has also developed and maintains a community of practice (COP) to ensure that ERTs and related colleagues have a space to discuss issues, gather practices and lessons learnt, learn from each other and from OHCHR's Geneva and New York offices. Currently, ERTs are located in the ROs in West Africa (WARO, Dakar, Senegal), Southern Africa (SARO, Pretoria, South Africa), Southeast Asia (SEARO, Bangkok, Thailand), Central America (ROCA, Panama City, Panama), South America (ROSA, Santiago, Chile) and Central Africa Sub-regional Centre (CARO, Yaoundé, Cameroon). An ERT will shortly be opening in Fiji and discussions with donors are ongoing for an additional ERTs in Addis Ababa.



Figure 1. Area of action of ERTs



Source: evaluation desk review

ERTs are composed of a Human Rights Officer (HRO) and an Information Management Officer (IMO). The HRO acts as focal point on early warning analysis, emergency response and humanitarian action, while the IMO leverages information management best practices, geo-spatial data and digital technology, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and visualization tools, monitoring and analysis tools and social media networks, to complement analytical data. The ERTs form part of OHCHR's commitment to implementation of the Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) Action Plan as well as the Prevention Platform of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and the wider reforms within the UN system to provide better integrated analysis and cross-sectorial information from external partners.

The HRUF initiative was launched by the UN in 2013 along with the adoption of Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP).<sup>1</sup> These two land-mark policies stressed the centrality of human rights to the UN's work and the obligations that international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) place on the Organization. They also highlight the need for it to take positive action to protect, promote and fulfill the rights encapsulated in these bodies of law. Both policies arose directly out of challenges that had faced the UN's FPs, in 2009, during the conflicts in Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), respectively. The UN had been criticized both for how it reacted to serious violations of both bodies of law and for failures of its situational awareness systems to anticipate and respond to the crises in a timely and

<sup>1</sup> "New UN 'Rights Up Front' Strategy Seeks to Prevent Genocide, Human Rights Abuses," UN News, December 18, 2013; UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces*, UN Doc. A/67/775-S/2013/110, March 5, 2013

effective manner.<sup>2</sup> At the launch of HRUF, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson noted, it was designed not only to prevent the UN from repeating its failures in Sri Lanka but also to continue ‘the learning process’ that began in the wake of the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina where the UN failed to protect civilian populations.<sup>3</sup>

In 2017, the UN restructured its peace and security architecture as part of a broader agenda to make conflict prevention a cross-pillar priority and foster an integrated approach to human rights and development.<sup>4</sup> The UN Secretary General also announced the launching of an ‘integrated prevention platform’ to build on HRUF and harness ‘diverse prevention tools and capacities across the system, at HQ and in the field’.<sup>5</sup> The UN has increasingly been downsizing its large Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and transitioning its FPs into smaller Special Political Missions (SPMs) or UN Country Teams (UNCTs).<sup>6</sup> As it reduces the physical protection that UN missions provide to civilians, there is a growing awareness of the importance of monitoring, reporting and advocacy mechanisms of IHRL both in preventing conflicts and providing early warnings of their likely occurrence.<sup>7</sup> The Secretary General’s 2018 Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative and his 2018 report on *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace* both contain numerous references to IHRL.<sup>8</sup> In 2020 the Secretary General launched a *Call to Action for Human Rights* with a commitment to develop an ‘Agenda for Protection’ which stated that all UN FPs in mission and non-mission (development) settings, should be ‘informed by a human rights risk and opportunity analysis’.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most significant recent reforms that the UN adopted under HRUF was the de-linking of the Resident Coordinators (RCs) functions from those of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, and the reassigning of these positions to the Development Coordination Office (DCO). The DCO is based in New York, with regional teams in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Istanbul and Panama. As well as supporting over 130s RC, covering 162 countries and territories, the DCO serves as secretariat of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has been argued that RCs had previously focused on the relatively uncontentious issues of development and humanitarian assistance, sometimes shying away from monitoring and reporting on violations of IHRL, on the grounds that this might antagonize host-state governments or

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<sup>2</sup> For details see: UN, *Memorandum from the Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka to the Secretary-General*, April 12, 2011; UN, *Report of the Secretary General’s Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, March 31, 2011; *Press statement by Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 5–15 October 2009, 15 October 2009, OHCHR; and Confidential note, leaked by the *New York Times*, from the UN Office of Legal Affairs to Mr. Le Roy, head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 1 April 2009.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, ‘Deputy Secretary-General’s Remarks at Briefing of the General Assembly on Rights Up Front,’ December 17, 2013

<sup>4</sup> *Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar Report of the Secretary-General*, A/72/525, 13 October 2017

<sup>5</sup> *United Nations, Home page* Antonio Guterres, ‘Meeting the Prevention Challenge’, October 2017,

[Ohttps://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/meeting-prevention-challenge](https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/meeting-prevention-challenge)

<sup>6</sup> Conor Foley & Ibrahim Wany, (2020). *Evaluation of Transitions from Human Rights Components in UN Peace Operations to Other Types of Field Presences*.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2018

<sup>8</sup> UN Secretary-General, “Secretary-General’s Remarks to Security Council High-Level Debate on Collective Action to Improve UN Peacekeeping Operations,” March 28, 2018; UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, “Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General,” UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, para. 21.

<sup>9</sup> UN Secretary-General, *The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights*, 2020

jeopardize program activities.<sup>10</sup> This, it is often argued, is partly why the UNCT had failed to speak out against the gross violation of IHL and IHRL in Sri Lanka in 2009.

UNCTs are also tasked with the protection and promotion of human rights in non-mission settings – which can help prevent and respond to crises before they escalate into conflicts. One process developed under HRUF was the creation of a ‘three-tier’ system whereby the UNCT or mission is asked to keep human rights concerns in mind when designing strategic documents, such as Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) [now named Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (SDCF)] in collaboration with host-state governments. RCs are also required to develop a strategy for addressing violations of IHL and IHRL in any situation where these are a risk.<sup>11</sup> UNDP and DPPA have also developed Early Warning, Early Action mechanisms and crisis dashboards which complement the work of the ERTs.

Another process, developed under HRUF and subsequently incorporated into the Secretary-General’s integrated Prevention Platform, is the Regional Monthly Reviews (RMR), which attempt to ensure that the UN system has a shared understanding of situations and takes early and coordinated action for prevention of conflict or serious violations of rights. The RMR process uses a combination of development, political, human rights and humanitarian analyses to define recommendations for strengthening UN action. UN entities participate in the RMR at Director level, considering early warning information and agreeing upon possible preventive measures to support the UN FP in responding to evolving situations. This complements the work of the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC), which was established in 2013 with a broad situational awareness mandate and produces daily briefing notes, drawing together information from across the system, intended to support decision makers in UN operational departments and agencies. UNOCC houses the RMR Secretariat and also prepares background data analytics and materials for the Executives and Deputies Committees, which oversee the RMRs. OHCHR has embedded a Human Rights Analyst within the UNOCC who works closely with the ERTs.

The ERTs provide a vehicle for OHCHR to promote both situational awareness and Early Warning, Early Action within the wider UN system at the field level, based on its recognized expertise as the world’s leading entity on the promotion and protection of IHRL. Most of the work of the ERTs to date has concentrated on the first main strands of activity: producing human rights risk analyses for the wider UN system at the HQ and field level. The second and third strands are complementary but could have some resource and wider ‘cultural’ implications for the way in which OHCHR works. There are, however, examples of good practice to draw on from both activity strands and

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<sup>10</sup> Rodrigo Saad, *The Human Rights Implications of the New UN Resident Coordinator System*, Universal Rights Group, March 13, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Gerrit Kurtz, *With Courage and Coherence: The Human Rights Up Front Initiative of the United Nations*, Global Public Policy Institute, July 2015.

which could be built on as the scope of ERTs expand. Developing these strands could require political and financial investment. In the opinion of the evaluation team, however, this would be fully justified by the programme's achievements to date.

## **Evaluation Background**

The evaluation was conducted between May and October 2022 by two independent evaluators who were contracted respectively for 45 and 60 days, working under the supervision of an Evaluation Manager and the guidance of a Reference Group drawn from OHCHR staff.

## **Methodology**

The methodology was outlined in the Inception Report, which was discussed with the Reference Group and amended throughout the evaluation to adapt to context. This is attached as an Annex to this Report and not repeated here for reasons of space. The methodology followed the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as well as UNEG evaluation guidance,<sup>12</sup> based on the principle of credibility – that is, ensuring that the best evidence available is harnessed, and that it is analysed appropriately, so as to generate findings, conclusions and recommendations that resonate, and that OHCHR's Senior Management Team (SMT) can feel confident in acting on. The evaluation has mixed summative and formative characteristics oriented towards providing information about its value and impact and identifying strengths and shortcomings. This has been developed through a theory-oriented approach, by which the evaluation team created its own intervention logic and methodological tools. Considering the difficulty in proving causality of normative projects the evaluation team has also approached the exercise of effectiveness from an outcome collection approach<sup>13</sup> with the objective of grasping commonalities between ERTs and contributing to the first phases to reach a more narrowed standardisation of the theory of change (ToC) of the programme.<sup>14</sup>

The data collection methodology consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted remotely and face to face with 75 informants – 57 of whom were OHCHR staff and 18 external stakeholders – selected through convenient sampling approach and reached the six regions being covered with a minimum of five informants per region plus HQ coverage from both the Geneva and New York offices. Informants included 39 females and 36 males ensuring a gender-wise distribution across the hierarchical levels of the UN. Leave no one behind (LNOB) and gender assessments were included in a stand-alone evaluation question and as a crosscutting item to assess its integration in all relevant programme life-cycle phases including specific analysis of needs assessments, implementation phases, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) set up and budget distribution. This was supplemented by direct observation during a COP held in Geneva as well as a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 12 members of the ERTs held in Geneva and an online questionnaire that was completed by five out of six ERTs.

While every attempt was made to locate and interview a greater number of external stakeholders the time constraints within which the evaluation was conducted and the fact that it was conducted over the months when many stakeholders were on holiday

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<sup>12</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work.

<sup>13</sup> See Wilson-Grau, R., & Britt, H. (2012). Outcome Harvesting. Ford Foundation's Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>14</sup> The evaluation had in the inception phase certain features of developmental evaluations that have shifted to summative and formative approaches adapting to the circumstances of the evaluation and its participants.

made this difficult. Most interviews were conducted remotely, which requires a comparatively lengthy process of initiating contact, explaining the evaluation's purpose, setting up convenient times over multiple time zones and then dealing with inevitable cancellations and rescheduling. In addition to this, most external stakeholders were likely to have been unaware that the ERTs were a separate programme of work for OHCHR and would have simply identified their work with that of the organization as a whole. For this reason, the evaluation team concentrated on locating and interviewing informants who could give specific information about the ERTs. The evaluation also included a list of HRAs that sit in RCOs that bring in the view and possibilities from these offices together with interviews with a sample of RCs and also PDAs sitting in their offices.

The evaluation team also drew on OHCHR's grey literature' (reports, evaluations, policy guidelines and directives, lessons-learned documents, minutes of meetings, etc.) and a secondary documentary analysis. A complete list of all interviewees and all documents consulted are contained in annexes to this report. The original methodology proposed a light outcome harvesting approach that included a brief follow up of its sixth methodological steps. Given the limitations of time and the fatigue of respondents, however, the evaluation team instead assumed the bulk of the process gathering the potential outcomes and substantiating them through interviews. Drafting and validation phases of the evaluation process as described in the Terms of Reference (ToR) have then been used to analyze and interpret the data and support the use of findings through a 'gather data and draft outcome descriptions' and then 'substantiate' through validation.

The main limitations to the evaluation relate to the experimental nature of the programme that hinders more standardised accountability approaches and the limitations to the use of more developed qualitative participative that are resource-intensive in terms of time and staff. The methodology annex contains all details of the methodology followed for the works including the sample covered by the evaluation team linked to the methodological tools used to reach them and a full overview of limitations and measures implemented to mitigate them.

## Evaluation Questions

<b>Relevance</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 1:</b> How relevant to the human rights situation in the regions, the needs of the stakeholders (right holders and duty bearers) the Office's mandate, OMP, the Sustainable Development Goals, HRUF and the Prevention Platform, as well as OHCHR's internal prevention strategy, have the ERTs been in the period evaluated? How does the programme align with and support national/regional plans, programs and priorities of local stakeholders, partners, donors or other UN agencies, including prevention mechanisms, on those issues that should be considered as human rights priorities, taking into account OHCHR's comparative advantages?
<b>Evaluation Question 2:</b> Was a context analysis of the human rights situation in the regions conducted during the planning of the programme? Were risks and assumptions considered during this process?
<b>Evaluation Question 3:</b> Are there priorities for responding to human rights situations in the region that have not been addressed by the programme? What changes could be made to address these?
<b>Coherence</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 4:</b> What is the added value of OHCHR / ERTs compared to other stakeholders, interventions, strategies and how have they been considered and played in setting up and implementation?
<b>Evaluation Question 5:</b> How has been the communication and coordination among the ERTs, the country/regional offices, ERS in Geneva and PSPS in New York and other units within and outside OHCHR in terms of programmatic, financial and administrative issues, including early warning analysis, information management and humanitarian Action?
<b>Evaluation Question 6:</b> How effectively does ERS monitor and evaluate the performance and results? Is relevant information and data systematically collected and analysed to feed into management decisions? What prevented the ERTs programme from achieving results? Was the results chain of actions, strategies and M&E on ERT correctly conceived in order to produce the expected outcomes?
<b>Effectiveness</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 7:</b> What evidence can be found on the success in achieving the outcomes set in its guiding documents in the proposed timeline? Are there any unforeseen outcomes? Are the outcomes a result of the outputs and action of the project? What are the identified enabling factors and processes and the hindrances of results?? Where positive results of the ERTs programme were found, what were the enabling factors and processes?
<b>Efficiency</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 8:</b> How balanced and adapted to context are the resources and processes available considering expected results and performance indicators? Have these achieved value for money?
<b>Impact Orientation</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 9:</b> To what extent are the ERTs programmes making – or could make in the future – a significant contribution to broader and longer-term enjoyment of rights?
<b>Sustainability</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 10:</b> What are the main challenges for sustainability of the different parts of the programme? Which have been the main successes? Are local stakeholders able and committed to continue working on the issues addressed by the ERTs? How effectively have they built national ownership and necessary capacity?
<b>Gender and Human Rights (Disability Inclusion) Integration</b>
<b>Evaluation Question 11:</b> Have gender and leave no one behind principles been correctly included in all programme cycles from design to implementation and M&E set up?

## 2. Main Findings presented according to evaluation criteria

**Evaluation Question 1:** *How relevant to the human rights situation in the regions, the needs of the stakeholders (right holders and duty bearers) the Office's mandate, its Office Management Plan (OMP), the UN's SDGs, HRUF and the Prevention Platform, as well as OHCHR's internal prevention strategy, have the ERTs been in the period evaluated? How does the programme align with and support national/regional plans, programs and priorities of local stakeholders, partners, donors or other UN agencies, including prevention mechanisms, on those issues that should be considered as human rights priorities, taking into account OHCHR's comparative advantages?*

The ERT programme as outlined in the introduction of this report, is extremely relevant to OHCHR's mandate, its Management Plan (OMP) and internal prevention strategy as well as the SDGs, HRUF and the Prevention Platform. The programme as it is being implemented is also relevant to the human rights situation in the regions. From the information available to the evaluation team, it appears that the programme aligns with and supports human rights related national and regional plans, programs and priorities of local stakeholders, partners, donors and other UN agencies, including prevention mechanisms, taking into account OHCHR's comparative advantages.

ERTs have been a key element of the OMP since the 2014-17 OMP cycle (through the thematic priority on 'early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity'), the 2016-2017 enhanced mini strategy on early warning, and most recently the OMP 2018-2021 and the under the pillar of peace and security. OHCHR remains committed in the extended OMP cycle of 2022-2023. Prevention has been prioritized in the current OMP as a crosscutting 'shift' throughout OHCHR's work. It aims to engage earlier and more strategically to address the risk of violations, conflicts, and crises before they impact on people's lives. Effective early warning and prevention also requires attention be paid to all human rights – economic, social and cultural rights as much as civil and political rights – and that risks are addressed in development contexts as well as in humanitarian crisis and peace operations. This requires greater attention to data trends, which is a different focus to the responsive individual casework approach of 'traditional' human rights monitoring and reporting.

The UN Security Council regularly includes protection of civilians (POC) in the mandated tasks of its PKOs, giving its peacekeeping soldiers and police power to use force, as a last resort, when civilian lives are threatened. The UN's most recent policy on POC notes that this 'takes place alongside broader UN efforts, including the promotion and protection of human rights and humanitarian protection, which seek to prevent, mitigate and stop threats to individuals' human rights and fundamental freedoms, ensure that these rights are respected and protected by duty bearers and

ensure access to basic services and humanitarian assistance<sup>15</sup>. The work of the ERTs is of obvious relevance to this ‘protection’ agenda. Although it is downsizing many of its PKOs, the Security Council still possesses a formidable array of instruments to promote compliance with IHRL and IHL. These include diplomatic and economic pressure, referrals to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and individual sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes. Most PKOs have mandates that include action to promote and protect human rights through activities such as monitoring and reporting and building the capacity of host-state institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs).<sup>16</sup> These also contribute to broader efforts in non-PKO settings to prevent and manage conflict, build peace, and foster development—all of which help build societal resilience to future crises.<sup>17</sup>

OHCHR, as a part of the UN, is widely seen as a neutral, global and independent institution that can credibly raise human rights concerns with the state authorities and work impartially with civil society. This makes it well placed to follow up on the recommendations of the Office of the High Commissioner, the UN’s human rights treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council (HRC) special procedures and Universal Periodic Review (UPR), drawing on the expertise of its Geneva Secretariat and also the involvement of the national authorities, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and CSOs as well as other UN entities. OHCHR’s Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division (TESPRDD) has a considerable body of expertise and information on these normative developments and the evaluation team believe that the ERTs should regularly coordinate with it to facilitate the sharing of relevant policy, methodology and learning support with OHCHR and UN FPs

It has been noted that the work of the UN ‘is extensive and fast paced’. The Security Council meets daily with almost fifty items on its agenda. The Secretariat manages thirteen sanctions regimes, sixteen peacekeeping operations, and nine special political missions, and there are 131 UNCTs delivering humanitarian and development assistance in 161 countries.<sup>18</sup>

The organization operates in many complex and high-threat environments. It is sometimes asked to use force to protect civilians from attack, and sometimes U.N. staff and buildings themselves are targeted. Yet despite such high-tempo, high-stakes, and complex operations, after 70 years the organization still does not have a robust situational awareness system.<sup>19</sup>

The evaluation team found considerable evidence that the ERTs have strengthened the capacity of OHCHR’s ROs and FPs and the wider UN system to both anticipate

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<sup>15</sup> UN Department of Peace Operations, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, November 2019

<sup>16</sup> Conor Foley, *Human Rights and Protection by UN Peace Operations*, Discussion paper, International Peace Institute, January 2022

<sup>17</sup> United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2018

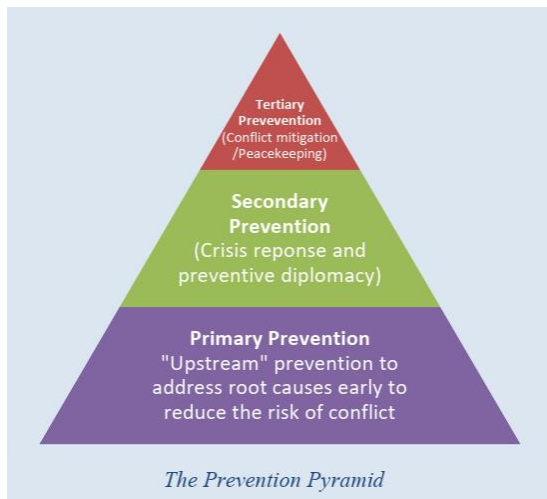
<sup>18</sup> Haidi Willmot, *Improving UN situational awareness, Enhancing the U.N.’s Ability to Prevent and Respond to Mass Human Suffering and to Ensure the Safety and Security of Its Personnel*, Stimson Centre, August 2017

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



and respond to human rights crises in ways that are extremely relevant to its work. For example, in Mozambique, the ROSA ERT played a key role in monitoring, documenting and tracking the onset of instability within Cabo Delgado, as well as the subsequent Peace Agreements and general elections in October 2019. It also helped to ensure the integration of human rights in the Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) after two cyclones earlier that year, with a particular focus on protection needs of people with disabilities, older persons and people with albinism. It prepared an analysis on risks to economic stability and access to social services in Zambia, in 2021, in collaboration with OHCHR’s Surge team of macroeconomists, to ensure that its COVID-19 recovery included a strong focus on the protection of human rights and LNOB. In Zimbabwe, it used the RMR process to promote an inter-agency mission that took place in March 2020. In Malawi, the ERT set up a Prevention Platform in the run up to the 2019 elections. This was subsequently used to mitigate serious human rights violations and major civil unrest over the next two years. In Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia and Benin the WARO ERT facilitated the development of information management and analysis systems during these countries presidential and parliamentary elections in 2020 and 2021. In Myanmar the SEARO ERT provided information management support to the OHCHR team in tracking human rights issues and concern following the coup of 2021. In Paraguay, in 2022, the ROSA ERT intervened to document and map an emerging pattern of widespread forced evictions and brought this to the attention of the RC and UNCT. These results are discussed more fully later in this report.

Figure 2. The prevention Pyramid in OHCHR



Source: OHCHR Prevention Strategy

The ERTs are also increasingly in direct contact with OHCHR’s embedded Human Rights Analyst in UNOCC. This post-holder has been working to leverage the outputs of the ERTs in the RMR materials themselves and in other UNOCC initiatives aimed at providing data-driven and human rights-based analysis to support early warning and prevention decision making by senior leadership at UNHQ. This also helps to meet the growing demand by UNHQ senior leadership for data-driven analysis for UN system-wide action on prevention and crisis to provide timely rights-based early warning and analysis

services.

All of these results clearly fit into the UN’s overall Prevention agenda. OHCHR’s own understanding of Prevention is summarized in the following diagram. As can be seen, this encompasses a range of work from long term development to addressing potential emergencies. The evaluation team found mixed views from interviewees as to where

the ERTs saw the main focus of their work on this pyramid.<sup>20</sup> This was also borne out by the desk review of programme documents and the surveys submitted by ERT members. Most agreed that the main focus should be on Early Warning (collection, analysis and visualization of data) and Early Action (especially within the UN system planning cycles and response mechanisms). Information from the ERTs feeds directly into OHCHR's Risk Analysis and Prevention Unit (RAPU), which is also located in ERS, and from there it can be disseminated through the RMRs and UNOCC. The same information can also be used in non-emergency settings to inform strategic documents such as the CCAs and UNDAFs/SDCFs.

**Evaluation Question 2:** *Was a context analysis of the human rights situation in the regions conducted during the planning of the programme? Were risks and assumptions considered during this process?*

Given that one of the main aims of the ERT programme is to improve the human rights situational awareness of UN FPs and OHCHR HQ, it is almost a non-sequitur to call for a formal and detailed contextual analysis before their deployment, since this will be one of their principal tasks on arrival. The evaluation team nevertheless believe that some greater planning and analysis could be undertaken prior to particular deployments to more clearly define the particular role of each ERT in each region. In interviews, many members of the ERTs noted that they had been required to 'hit the ground running' on first deployment and would have appreciated more standardized guidance about their roles and functions in emergency settings. As will be discussed subsequently, the evaluation team also believe that OHCHR needs to develop a more standardized approach to data collection and governance issues surrounding the use of information technology (IT) tools.

The ERTs are deployed in regions whose countries and UN FPs span the spectrum from full-scale conflict to post-conflict, fragile and developing states. The global reach of the programme is one of its strengths, but also means that each deployment takes place in a very different context. It is doubtful that a 'one size fits all' formulation could be designed to accommodate such differences in a meaningful or helpful way. Approaches need to be designed which balance the need for flexibility in working arrangements together with the result-based management approach required by the institution's OMP and donors. The evaluation team has not had access to any formalized diagnosis or regional assessment focused exclusively on ERTs assessing items such as priority countries, topics and overall approaches. It appears that risks and assumptions have not been formally factored into a standard format, but it is clearly included in ERS's internal planning processes and decisions by senior management about when to deploy each ERT and where. Considerations in this planning process include the likelihood of significant human rights crises or violent conflict, the capacity and needs of the OHCHR RO and the structure and nature of the UN FPs in each region. The evaluation team believes that the flexibility of the current arrangements works well and there is no need to over-bureaucratize these procedures. It does, however, believe that OHCHR should develop a more standardized formulation, for deployments, prioritization and reporting which ensures a greater global consistency, in line with the result-based management approach required by the institution's OMP and donors.

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<sup>20</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

The ERTs have a dual reporting line: to the OHCHR Regional Representative, who heads each RO to where they have been deployed and to the head of ERS in Geneva. In practice most day-to-day reporting appears to be to the head of the RO and all ERT members interviewed were clear on this structure as were the Regional Representatives.<sup>21</sup> Most Regional Representative interviewed stated that the 'final say' in any decision about what issues the ERT would work on and what country visits they would undertake rested with themselves – although this would be taken in consultation with the head of ERS when necessary. These views were supported by the 'grey literature' that the evaluation team received.

The size of the ROs to which ERTs are deployed varies dramatically as does the accessibility of the countries within the regions that they cover. For example, SEARO has around 40 staff, covering 10 countries – and is OHCHR's largest, but many of the countries of most concern, are extremely closed and access is almost impossible. By contrast SARO has less than a dozen staff, covering 14 countries, none of which includes an OHCHR Country Office. WARO has 20 staff and covers 6 countries. ROCA has 25 staff (international, local, HRAs, technical assistance experts based in different countries) and covers 20 countries. ROSA has 24 staff covering seven countries. CARO has 25 staff and its ERT covers 10 countries.

The ERTs are designed to complement and support the work of in-country Human Rights Advisors (HRAs), Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) and gender advisors to Resident Coordinators (RCs), through the Development Coordination Office (DCO), UN Country Teams (UNCTs), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The priorities of each ERT, in each region, will largely be determined in consultation with these UN colleagues, under the direction of the Regional Representative, and the overall guidance of the head of OHCHR's Emergency Response Section (ERS).

Only CARO and WARO have UN PKOs in their regions and so most of the work of UN FPs in the regions to which the ERTs are deployed takes place primarily in a developmental context. Colombia has, until recently been experiencing a non-international armed conflict and has a SPM deployed there whose human rights section complements the work of the OHCHR Country Office. The work of these SPMs is supported by the Department for Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA) in UN HQ. Myanmar is also experiencing increased violence and the forced displacement of people from their homes since a military coup d'état in February 2021 and the UN Secretary General has deployed a Special Envoy to the country. Mozambique also has a personal envoy from the Secretary General deployed to it, which provides good offices support in mediating dialogue between the government and opposition. If the ERT programme continues to be rolled out it will likely include more countries and territories where the lines between armed conflict and other situations of violence and tension are increasingly blurred.

Given such different contextual backgrounds, the nature, tasks and priorities of each ERT are very different and these need to be determined by the Regional Representative

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<sup>21</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

with considerable autonomy. The direct reporting line to the head of the ERS appears to be important, however, in ensuring that the ERTs retain their distinct functionality. The programme is also supported by a dedicated staff member in the ERS, its Programme Coordinator, and frequently interacts with other units in the section such as the RAPU and the Humanitarian Action Unit (HAU) as well as the PSPS in New York (including, the Human Rights Analyst embedded in UNOCC). The COP also provides space to ERTs and related colleagues to discuss issues, gather practices and lessons learnt, learn from each other and from OHCHR's Geneva and New York offices. As will be discussed in subsequent findings, communication and coordination between the field based ERTs and HQ is generally good, although it could be improved in some areas. Most members of the ERTs interviewed told the evaluation team that they did not feel that their roles in each particular RO had been fully defined and agreed with the OHCHR Regional Representatives and the relevant UN FP. Others noted that they were sometimes 'sucked into' the general human rights and information management work of their offices, as 'just another couple of staff members' which left little time to address their specific roles.<sup>22</sup>

**Evaluation Question 3:** *Are there priorities for responding to human rights situations in the region that have not been addressed by the programme? What changes could be made to address these?*

The ERTs are not designed to cover every violation of IHRL in every country in the regions where they are present. Their coverage and response capacity are obviously also limited given the small size of the teams, the vast scope of the areas where they have been deployed and the seriousness of the conflicts and crises they are monitoring. The ERTs are also not yet a global programme, although their regional reach is increasing as their roll-out continues. There are still several important regions of the world where crises are occurring that could lead to conflicts or serious violations of IHRL and IHL and where the ERTs do not have an effective presence. One ERT is also covering both Southeast Asia and South Asia, which are hugely different contextual situations. There are currently no ERTs deployed in the Middle East and Northern African (MENA) region, Central Asia and Southeast Europe, despite the obvious relevance of the programme to many of the countries in these regions. For this reason, the evaluation team supports the continued expansion of the programme and endorses OHCHR's plans to open new ERTs in regions not yet adequately covered by the programme.

The ERTs do not cover countries where OHCHR has a Country Office, which are the strongest of its stand-alone presences. For example, OHCHR already has four large Country Offices in Latin America: in Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras – as well as smaller presences in Bolivia and Peru and so the ERTs do not duplicate the work of these offices. Nor would the ERTs duplicate the work of the human rights component in a SPM or PKO – which include some of OHCHR's largest FPs in terms of staff deployed. Given that these UN FPs are in countries which are likely to be experiencing the worst conflicts and violations of IHRL and IHL, this slightly skews the programme if its principal focus of activity is on the production of human rights risk analyses for particular regions. For example, if human rights violations in one country leads to refugee flows into another or spark a conflict that then de-stabilises its neighbours, it would seem a false distinction for the ERT to only analyse the situations in the places where

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<sup>22</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

OHCHR had no other effective FP, while ignoring those where it was present on the ground. Such a division of work does, however, make sense if the ERTs are also intended to 'respond' to human rights emergencies as well as simply monitor them, since they are designed to be deployed to places where the capacity of OHCHR's FP is weak.

As well as supporting OHCHR's HQ and FPs, the ERTs are designed to complement and support the work of in-country Human Rights Advisors (HRAs), Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) and gender advisors to Resident Coordinators (RCs), through the Development Coordination Office (DCO), UN Country Teams (UNCTs), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The priorities of each ERT, in each region, will largely be determined in consultation with these UN colleagues, under the direction of the Regional Representative, and the overall guidance of the head of OHCHR's Emergency Response Section (ERS). The partnerships established here have helped to shape their priorities and agendas in a responsive manner. In interviews, questionnaires and an FGD, most ERT staff viewed this as a major focus of their advocacy work.<sup>23</sup> The priorities of each ERT, in each region, will largely be determined in consultation with these colleagues, under the direction of the Regional Representative and the overall guidance of the head of ERS. In some places the HRAs are OHCHR national staff, who report directly to the OHCHR RO, while in others they are international and directly advise the RC, HCT or UNCT. This distinction appears somewhat anomalous to the evaluation team as both types of HRAs do very similar work.

UNCTs typically consist of UN Agencies, Funds, and Programs (UN AFPs), such as the Development Programme (UNDP), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), many of which have 'protection' in their mandates and often base their programming activities which can be found in IHRL, IHL and refugee law. During a humanitarian crisis, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) can establish a HCT and roll-out the cluster system to which the agencies and funds will participate. In some cases, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) is 'double hatted' RC for the duration of the crisis. As the deployment of PDAs and HRAs has become more widespread, OHCHR is gaining increasing access to the discussions of the UNCTs, HCTs and the RCs and HCs. The ERTs have often helped to provide entry points into these, particularly through the creation of Prevention Platforms. A number of interviewees described these platforms as an extremely useful tool for HRAs to use to ensure that the UN FPs responses are informed by a human rights-based analysis. The ERTs work clearly complements that of the DCO and UNDPs own crisis response bureau as well as the conflict prevention work of DPPA. The evaluation team believes that OHCHR should consider how to deepen its cooperation on data collection, management and analysis on Early Warning, Early Action with UNDP, OCHA, DCO, DPPA and other relevant actors.

Working with humanitarian actors to ensure that their responses are informed by a human rights-based analysis remains one of the strands of the programme's activities. It appears to the evaluation team, however, that this activity has been, in effect, deprioritized due to lack of resources. The evaluation team found fewer references to such activities in recent programme documents and narrative reports. In interviewees

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<sup>23</sup> Focus Group Discussion, Geneva | June 2022

some OHCHR staff argued that humanitarian protection work really needs to take place at the field level of a humanitarian crisis and the ERTs had neither the structure nor resources to undertake this given their small size and huge geographical reach. Others argued that there are regional humanitarian protection hubs in many of the places where the ERTs are located, which can help to shape the work of Protection Clusters at the country level.<sup>24</sup> The evaluation team believes that OHCHR HQ could increase its inputs into humanitarian policy and decision-making amongst UN and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through its participation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Global Protection Cluster (GPC).

In 2016, the IASC adopted a policy reaffirming the importance of protection in humanitarian action and emphasizing its significance as a collective responsibility of all humanitarian actors. Following the release of the Internal Review Panel Report on Sri Lanka, in 2011,<sup>25</sup> the then OHCHR High Commissioner, had recommended a whole of system review of protection in humanitarian action.<sup>26</sup> This review noted that HRUF was still 'widely seen as a UN headquarters agenda' with 'little knowledge or buy-in to it in the field.' A more recent review of the IASC's policy found that 'partial progress has been made towards its implementation' but there was 'still a significant gap between policy and practice' which remained 'incoherent, inadequate and ineffective'.<sup>27</sup> As discussed above, in 2020 the Secretary General's Call for Action on Human Rights contains a commitment to develop an 'Agenda for Protection' which includes the development of human rights risk and opportunity analyses by all UN FPs.

The graph below shows that the ERTs see information management and early warning as the most important focus of their work, followed closely by networking. This is followed by rapid deployments and capacity building, followed by others. Significantly, support for investigative bodies (which is not part of the ERTs mandated activities) and humanitarian action (which is) are seen as the least important area of work by the ERTs themselves. One exception to this trend is SEARO that has focused on capacity building to NHRIs with the aim of integrating human rights into their humanitarian responses.

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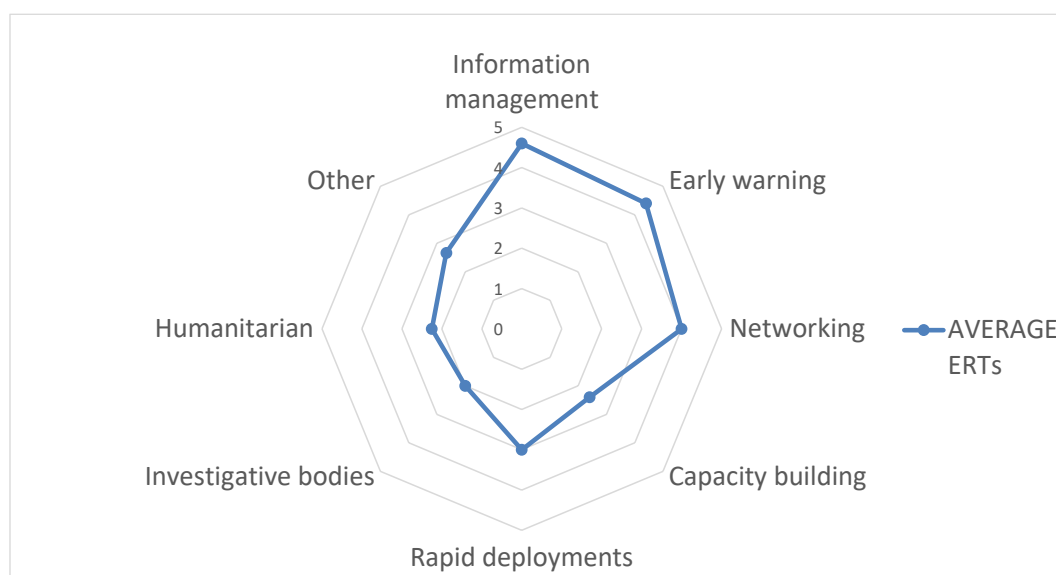
<sup>24</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

<sup>25</sup> UN, *Memorandum from the Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka to the Secretary-General*, April 12, 2011; UN, *Report of the Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, March 31, 2011

<sup>26</sup> Norah Niland, Riccardo Polastro, Antonio Donini, and Amra Lee, "Independent Whole of System Review of Protection in the Context of Humanitarian Action," Norwegian Refugee Council, May 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Cocking, J., Davies, G., Finney, N. et al. (2022) *Independent review of the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy*. HPG commissioned report. London: ODI

Graphic 1. Average focus of action of ERTs



Source: Surveys

The ERTs do engage in the IASC’s regional structures, including on emergency preparedness, gender in humanitarian action and community engagement, although this is an area of work that could potentially be strengthened. For example, in Southern Africa, the ERT has explored avenues for collaboration on humanitarian needs assessments, contingency planning and protection issues and participates in the UN Protection Working Group in South Africa. It has also provided technical support in the setting-up of the Social Protection Group, part of the UNSDCF in South Africa and the first Zambia Humanitarian Development Nexus Thematic Group. In West Africa, the ERT participates in the Regional IASC, the regional Protection Working Group and the regional Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Working Group. It also participates in regional coordination efforts on the COVID-19 global humanitarian response plans in Togo, Benin, Sierra Leone and Liberia where it has helped to ensure that these incorporated a specific gender focus and a holistic vulnerability assessment. In Southeast Asia the ERT, together with OHCHR’s Methodology, Education and Training Section (METS) and the Asia Pacific Forum (APF), helped to develop an online course on human rights in humanitarian action for NHRIs and a follow up seminar on human rights and humanitarian emergencies. The ERT is also working with DPPA, and UNDP in establishing a Regional Crisis Risk Dashboard (CRD) looking at freedom of expression in the region.

Humanitarian protection policymakers and practitioners also told the evaluation team that they would welcome increased involvement of the ERTs at the regional level and that this would help them to respond to human rights and humanitarian crises that would otherwise go unaddressed. The evaluation team believe that it is useful for the ERTs to be in the same region as the crisis, to build networks and develop situational awareness, and that short-term deployments can be very useful, particularly for setting up early warning systems and prevention platforms. OHCHR’s ‘courage’ in responding to humanitarian crises in a principled way also appears to be widely respected although some humanitarians appear to slightly resent OHCHR’s ‘encroachment’ on their

space.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the evaluation team believe that the ERT's capacity to participate in Protection Clusters during particular humanitarian crises helps ensure that human rights protection issues are not neglected or deliberately avoided in the name of 'humanitarian neutrality'.<sup>29</sup>

The evaluation team believe that one value of the ERTs is that it is helping to build a more 'field orientated culture' in OHCHR. In deploying more staff closer to the field, it is important that OHCHR HQ needs to be prepared to provide them with more institutional support given the 'inevitable resistance' of some parts of the UN system to a human rights orientated approach.<sup>30</sup> Some ERT staff and former staff also stated that outreach to humanitarian actors could be particularly useful as a form of leverage with RCs and UNCTs both before and during humanitarian crises and so could contribute to the development of Early Warning, Early Action strategies.<sup>31</sup> This, however, clearly has resource implications and might necessitate the addition of another HRO to the ERTs (perhaps with a brief to cover humanitarian affairs as well as economic, social and cultural rights) and more dedicated support at HQ.

**Evaluation Question 4:** *What is the added value of OHCHR / ERTs compared to other stakeholders, interventions, strategies and how have they been considered and played in setting up and implementation?*

The main 'added value' of the ERT is that they are designed to strengthen the situational awareness of both OHCHR and UN FP's through the predictable production of human rights risk analyses, to identify trends that could lead to serious violations or conflict and to establish the basis for timely, targeted, preventive action. This forecasting analytical power is backed by information management, networking and filling the gaps in OHCHR FP capacity. There was broad agreement amongst those interviewed for this evaluation that this involves gathering, collating and analysing data from the field which can be disseminated and presented in a timely, concise and visually attractive manner to the UN's own situational awareness mechanisms, as well as outreaching to UN FPs and the humanitarian sector.

The ERTs are collecting, storing and cataloguing far more data than is usually handled at the field level. New developments in IT have led to an exponential increase in the volume and types of data available. There are risks as well as opportunities associated with using non-traditional data sets and sources (including quality, coverage, provenance and construct validity), which requires experience and training. The evaluation team believe that the ERTs would benefit from more consistent practice in assessing and using external data sets, as well as improved data governance to include these assessments in the associated metadata. Within the COP the ERTs and relevant ERS colleagues are jointly working on standardization for assessing changes in risk profile in order to make clearer and more consistent links between trends, assessed risk and prevention efforts. The evaluation team believe that the ERTs can contribute to a shared OHCHR-wide approach to information and analysis systems, to maximize impact and use of resources and bring a results-focused approach to its work.

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<sup>28</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

<sup>29</sup> For discussion, see Conor Foley and Katerina Stolyarenko, *Evaluation of the Regional Office for Central Asia*, OHCHR, October 2014

<sup>30</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.



There also appears to be some conceptual differences both about the coherence of the two other strands of activity and how the current nomenclature of the ERTs reflects the programme's actual work, although it was difficult to triangulate this information. It was broadly agreed that the two activities described in the programme documents – working with humanitarian actors and providing emergency response capacity to help OHCHR respond to actual or emerging human rights crises – have in practice received less priority in the ERT programme to date. Some differences were, however, expressed about whether these strands of work should be formally dropped from the programme as part of a 're-branding' to focus more on the data collection, analysis and dissemination aspects of their work, or whether, given some increased donor funding, emergency response and deployment during humanitarian crises could play a complementary role in an expanded ERT programme.<sup>32</sup>

As previously discussed, the evaluation team found mixed views from interviewees as to where the ERTs saw themselves operating in the prevention, pyramid and whether the main focus of their Early Warning, Early Action activities was on the severity of particular human rights violations or the potential of such violations to lead to violent conflict. This is also reflected in the programme's 'grey literature'. Such ambiguity is not, however, confined to debate about the ERTs. HRUF is described in its founding statement as:

an initiative to strengthen prevention of serious concerns that cut across the UN's three pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights. . . *In the worst situations, the initiative also seeks to prevent the most serious life-threatening violations.* The initiative aims to realize a cultural change within the UN system . . . It encourages staff to take a principled stance and to *act with moral courage to prevent serious and large-scale violations*, and pledges Headquarters support for those who do so.<sup>33</sup> [emphasis added]

The UN Security Council Resolution that endorsed HRUF, in 2014, noted that serious human rights abuses are not only a consequence of conflict but 'can be an early indication of a descent into conflict or escalation of violence' and that the domestic implementation of human rights obligations can 'contribute to timely prevention of conflicts'.<sup>34</sup> OHCHR's own prevention strategy also notes that: 'Effective prevention requires the early identification of risks that allow for preventive or mitigatory measures to be designed and implicated. This applies to the prevention of human rights violations as well as to the prevention of wider conflict or crisis.'<sup>35</sup> While these statements are undoubtedly true, they do not show how the ERT programme sees itself aligning with national and regional plans, programs and priorities of local stakeholders, partners, donors or other UN agencies, where these have priorities that are not focused on conflict prevention. A fundamental principle of IHRL is that all victims of violations have a right to a remedy and the treaty and non-treaty mechanisms, which guide all OHCHR's work respond to and try to prevent all such violations. A conflict prevention strategy, however, would probably focus on a narrower set of rights and more serious types of IHRL or IHL violations that could potentially trigger violent conflict or result from it. In practice it appears that the ERTs do focus on the type of violations that might lead to 'violent conflict', but this

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<sup>32</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

<sup>33</sup> UN News, "New UN 'Rights Up Front' Strategy Seeks to Prevent Genocide, Human Rights Abuses," 18 December 2013.

<sup>34</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2171, 21 August 2014

<sup>35</sup> OHCHR Homepage, 'Human rights and early warning of violations, conflict or crisis: OHCHR and prevention', [https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr\\_homepage](https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage)

is not the exclusive focus of their work and nor is the question of what constitutes a 'violent conflict' fully defined.

The ERTs have monitored responses to COVID-19 and natural disasters, for example, which clearly could constitute humanitarian emergencies, although they are not necessarily conflict related. The ERTs are also taking on work on climate-change and violations of economic, social and cultural rights, which have traditionally been regarded as fitting more closely into the development than the peace and security agendas, although they are major drivers of conflict. Indeed, one of the innovations of the ERTs – and the HRUF, Call to Action for Human Rights and Prevention agenda, from which they derive – is that they recognize that some of the traditional binary divisions between IHL and IHRL and the positive and negative obligations of both bodies of law do not adequately address many situations of violence, poverty, inequality and injustice in the world today. While the legal distinctions between an international armed conflict, a non-international armed conflict and a situation of tension and intermittent violence, which does not constitute an armed conflict is clearly defined in international legal jurisprudence, there are an increasing number of situations of violence, where this cannot be so easily distinguished.<sup>36</sup>

The distinction between 'emergency' and 'non-emergency' settings when considering responses to human rights violations may also not always be helpful. Some interviewees argued that the ERTs should instead be guided by the seriousness of the violations in determining whether or not to respond.<sup>37</sup> In much of Latin America, for example, there are serious and widespread violations of IHRL, but these are very unlikely to meet the legal definition of an international or non-international armed conflict. When the ROCA and ROSA ERTs engage in proactive response work to serious human rights violations, they are probably doing so in response to the violations themselves, and the capacity of OHCHR to address them, rather than based on a calculation as to whether or not these will lead to an armed conflict. In Southern Africa, by contrast, violence, particularly surrounding elections, political protest, or religious and communal tension have a very strong potential to turn from civil unrest into conflict. Southern Africa is also experiencing an increase in humanitarian disasters due to climate change and so the prevention agenda has a very strong regional resonance, particularly with UNCTs and RCs.

Other regions have different situational contexts and so it is probably impossible to generalize whether or not the ERTs really are an 'emergency' mechanism when it comes to analyzing human rights violations and their capacity to spark armed conflict. The prevention agenda will probably have different regional resonance with different UNCTs and RCs. Some interviewees stated that they used the acronym ERT, rather than spelling out the full name, in contexts where they felt that this might cause confusion. Others stated that the main usefulness of the current nomenclature was that it identified the ERTs as the field component of the ERS. Similar differences were encountered around the use of the word 'response', which some felt could also be misleading. These argued that the ERTs main 'added value' was their ability to analyze, process and present data, which showed emerging trends. The concern was that in 'responding' to a particular crisis the ERT members risked getting 'sucked into' reactive work, losing their analytical, anticipatory, and forward-thinking capacity. It was noted that this could be a particular

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<sup>36</sup> Geneva Convention, Protocol II, Article 1, 1977. See also ICTY *Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic*, 1995

<sup>37</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

problem if the ERT stepped up their engagement with humanitarian actors as this could involve participating in more protection clusters in places where the ERTs were already thinly spread. Although these views are anecdotal and cannot easily be triangulated, the evaluation team encountered them quite frequently during its interviews.

While no interviewees objected to the word ‘teams’, there was some discussion about whether the ERTs could indeed rapidly deploy to the field in response to particular emergencies, given their limited capacity – of two people in each region – and the bureaucratic structures of the UN Secretariat when it came to emergency deployments. OHCHR does have a standing roster for emergency deployment of staff during particular crises as do many other UN entities. Some concern was expressed that the current nomenclature could lead to confusion about whether or not this work could be considered part of the remit of the ERTs.<sup>38</sup> Others stated that they considered the main added value of the ERTs was in show-casing data rather than original research. It was also questioned how much the ERTs should focus ‘outwards’ to RCs and UNCTs, and that potentially more attention should be given to using situational analyses to inform OHCHR’s own internal programming. The evaluation team did not receive sufficient triangulated information to reach a finding on these issues.

The location of the ERTs in the ROs – with a line-reporting management to the Regional Representatives – is clearly intended to strengthen the capacity of these offices to both anticipate and respond to human rights crises. The ERTs are not simply data collection and analysis bodies and being physically located in the region where the crises that they are monitoring are likely to occur does strengthen OHCHR’s FPs and their potential leverage with UNCTs and RCs. Some interviewees felt that the main added value of the ERTs was that they work within the nexus between humanitarian, peace and development actors, championing the principles of HRUF and the Prevention Platform and strengthening the capacity of UNCTs and RCs to carry out their own emergency response planning within the framework provided by IHRL. This was supported by programme documents, secondary document analysis and external interviews. The evaluation team agree with this assessment.

Much of the work of the ERTs has been accomplished through training UN FPs, including UNCTs and RCs, on the RMR internal risk framework, and how it links to the SDGs and the application of the Guiding Principles of the CCA, particularly the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and LNOB. One of the main Outputs of the ERTs to date has been the organization of seminars and training events for UN FPs and CSOs, as well providing assistance to the HRAs and UNCTs in integrating HRBA into the planning processes. This is strongly reflected in programme documents and narrative reports to donors. Some OHCHR interviewees expressed some concern that the ERTs would be seen as primarily providing training – ‘yet more training’ – on internal UN processes. They did, however, feel that the networking opportunities provided during these had come in useful during actual crises when the systems needed to be operated. One interviewee also noted that the ERTs had used these training events to reach out to CSOs and NHRIs who are often excluded from Early Warning, Early Action crises and humanitarian response systems by international agencies.<sup>39</sup> The evaluation team believe that it would be useful for more of this type of information – focused on Outcomes rather than Outputs – could be included in reports to donors.

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<sup>38</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

The IMOs of the ERTs have helped them to provide more effective visual imagery of potential and actual human rights crises in a way that makes information gathered for Early Warning, Early Action purposes easy to absorb and understand. The IMOs have also helped to transform what otherwise might be seen as 'dry legal texts' into a language that is understood more broadly by UN FPs and other partners.<sup>40</sup> The evaluation team believe that some further 'information product branding' from OHCHR HQ would be useful as a single IMO in the field does not usually have the capacity or resources to produce these types of products to the necessary level of professionalism. Long standing ERTs' members have developed an analytical know-how that merge IMO and HROs set of skills in ways which strengthen the objectives of the programme.

In May 2020, the UN Secretary General published a report on data strategy recognizing it as a strategic asset with enormous transformative potential for its work in development, peace and security, humanitarian, and human rights.<sup>41</sup> This recognized that 'cultivating better approaches to using data will deliver better outcomes: Stronger decision-making and thought-leadership, greater data access and sharing, improved data governance and collaboration, robust data protection and privacy with respect for human rights, greater efficiency across our work, more transparency & accountability, and more relevant services for people and planet.' There has been a huge increase in demand for better data trend analysis from the EOSG and within the UN senior leadership. The ERTs are making a significant contribution to meeting this need. Other UN agencies are also investing in early warning and prevention systems with their own branded visuals. UNDP, for example, has its own early warning 'dashboard' and some OHCHR field staff stated that they had used these tools, rather than trying to create their own, during particular early warning and prevention crises. The evaluation team believe that such synergies are a good practice and OHCHR should continue to encourage UN inter-entity cooperation at the field level through the work of the ERTs.

**Evaluation Question 5:** *How has been the communication and coordination among the ERTs, the country/regional offices, ERS in Geneva, and PSPS in New York, and other units within and outside OHCHR in terms of programmatic, financial and administrative issues?*

Communication and coordination amongst the ERTs in the ROs and the ERS in Geneva and PSPS in New York have generally been good considering the rather fragmented, horizontal and overlapping structures that exist, both within OHCHR and in the wider UN system. The ERT Programme Coordinator provides dedicated support on programmatic issues, such planning, programming, budget, recruitment and fundraising – including reporting to donors. The coordinator also ensures that regular exchanges are organized, such as monthly calls and the COP as well as 'representing' the ERTs within ERS and OHCHR.

The ERS is part of the FOTCD of OHCHR which is responsible for overseeing and supporting its work at country and regional levels. It contains six geographic sections: Africa I (East and Southern Africa), Africa II (West and Central Africa), Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, the Americas and Europe and Central Asia. FOTCDs day-to-day work of OHCHR in the field includes following human rights developments at

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<sup>40</sup> Evaluation survey response, May 2022

<sup>41</sup> Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity 2020-22, UN May 2020

the national and regional levels, engaging with governments, regional mechanisms, NHRIs, CSOs and the UN system, and interfacing with the international human rights mechanisms. FOTCD also contains three specialized sections: ERS, Peace Missions Support Section (PMSS) and the National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section (NIRMS).

The ROs, Country Offices and Regional Representatives are also part of FOTCD – reporting through its geographic sections – while the human rights components of UN missions are supported by PMSS in New York. The PPS is also based in New York and reports to the Assistant General Secretary (AGS) for Human Rights, who oversees the day-to-day running of the office in which the PMSS is based. The AGS also interfaces with the UN’s New York based institutions including the Security Council and the EOSG. The PPS works to mainstream human rights into wider UN efforts to prevent conflict and crisis and promote sustainable peace and has been largely responsible for the development of OHCHR’s prevent agenda. As previously discussed, the ERTs also provide a link between UN FPs and the norm-setting procedures of international law, through the HRC, human rights treaty reporting mechanisms, Special Procedures and the UPR, much of whose work is coordinated by the TESPDD. Most of these procedures are based in Geneva, as is FOTCD, but many of the other UN entities that the ERTs interact with are based in New York.

The ERTs are, therefore, facing ‘upwards’ into different parts of OHCHR, which are divided, both geographically and functionally in ways that may pre-dispose some of them to take different views of the ERTs core utility. The ERTs maintain close communication and coordination with the RAPU and the Information Management Data Analysis unit (IMDA), whose own work and priorities interface with their own. The ERS also contains an Investigation Support Unit (ISU), which is responsible for the deployment of human rights teams to support to commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions. The ISU does not interface with the ERTs and so its staff have not been interviewed as part of this evaluation, but its use of rosters for short term deployments does have potential relevance to the third of the ERTs activity strands.

The ERTs work has some intersections and commonalities with other parts of the wider UN system and inter-entity bodies such as the UN Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law (GFP), which is a coordination mechanism established to enhance predictability, coherence, accountability and effectiveness in the delivery of UN rule of law assistance at country and international levels. The GFP is co-chaired by UNDP and Department of Peace Operations (DPO) Its partners include the EOSG, OHCHR, UNHCR, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Operations Services (UNOPS) and UN Women. In addition, the GFP brings together other UN entities working in the rule of law area, such as UNICEF) the UN Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) DPPA and the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict (TOE).

DPO has an Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI), which contains a Justice and Corrections Standing Capacity (JCSC) that regularly deploys police and rule of law experts to the field both to UN mission and non-mission settings. As will be discussed further in a subsequent finding of this report, the Prevention Platform that the ERT created in Malawi, helped the HRA deployed there to call on the JCSC to send police training officers to help capacitate the Malawian police during the post-election crisis of 2019. Various UN entities, including UN Women also regularly use a roster of

experts maintained by the Justice Rapid Response (JRR) network, which can rapidly deploy short-term term legal staff to crisis, usually to UN Commissions of Inquiry, the ICC or particular UN investigative mechanisms. OHCHR also has an internal rapid deployment roster for Human Rights Officers, which it can use for emergencies. ERT members have participated in such deployments on occasion.<sup>42</sup>

The PBSO and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) often supports OHCHR projects in its capacity as a donor, through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). This also helps weak and fragile states generate attention on their progress and challenges and offers informal space to discuss issues with external stakeholders, including Member States, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), CSOs, and regional organizations.<sup>43</sup> Clearly, the work of both the PBC and GFP can be an important tool for OHCHR, ERS and the ERTs. Yet an evaluation carried out for OHCHR in 2019/20 noted that: ‘a number of external stakeholders stated that OHCHR’s participation in both fora was too infrequent and that it could be much better at framing its interventions in ways that more effectively contributed to these bodies own planning processes . . . OHCHR in New York also has few staff of sufficient seniority to engage with some of their colleagues in some fora’.<sup>44</sup> This situation does appear to have considerably improved since, through the deployment of dedicated staff working with DPPA and PBSO. Improving the ERTs communication and coordination structures, nevertheless requires a holistic consideration of how OHCHR inter-relates with the rest of the UN system.

In a previous external evaluation carried out by one member of the present evaluation team, another UN official likened the back-and-forth negotiations that take place between the UN’s decision-making fora in New York and Geneva to ‘an elaborate dance ritual with its own steps, sequencing and rhythm that take time to master.’<sup>45</sup> He noted that the Budget Committee (C5) was often neglected in this process, but that getting the right information to it at the right time and in the right format was crucial in turning policy recommendations and strategy discussions into actual changes at the field level. As one senior OHCHR official told this evaluation team ‘sometimes member states mandate us do one thing in the HRC in Geneva and then the same ones block the funding that we need to do it in C5 in New York.’<sup>46</sup> Improving this communication could also help to improve the second two strands of the ERTs main activities. The ERTs could be seen as facilitators of OHCHR’s humanitarian engagement and capacity crisis response by alerting its own FPs and HQ as well as the wider UN system when and where this was necessary.

The day-to-day line management and administration of the ERTs, through the ROs and ERS, appears to be working well. The COP provides a good forum to facilitate communication and coordination, promote discussion and exchange good practices. The move to online working due to COVID restrictions has helped to facilitate this communication as OHCHR in its Geneva and New York offices have increasingly

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<sup>42</sup> For further discussion on emergency deployments see Conor Foley, *Review of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict Field Support Work*, June 2022

<sup>43</sup> Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal, Endorsed by the Secretary General, 4 February 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Conor Foley & Ibrahim Wany, (2020). *Evaluation of Transitions from Human Rights Components in UN Peace Operations to Other Types of Field Presences*

<sup>45</sup> Dr. Conor Foley (Team Lead), Dr. Cecilia Deme (Co-Team Lead), Dr. Friedarike Santner, Horia Mosadiq, Syed Kazim Baqeri, Richie Lontulungu Nsombola and Gina Matalatala, *Mid-term external evaluation of CIVIC Program: Promoting the protection of civilians in conflict in Afghanistan and UN peacekeeping operations*, CIVIC, May 2021

<sup>46</sup> Interview conducted, July 2022

standardized such communication both between one and another and with OHCHR's FPs. The ERTs regional spread and focus on information management and data analysis and dissemination – and its link to the ERS – puts it in the forefront of OHCHR efforts to improve its internal and external communication and coordination within the UN system. The evaluation team were particularly impressed with ERS's plans to establish a 'situation room' for OHCHR's field work later this year, which could provide an opportunity for addressing the need for an integrated IT data collection and management process discussed earlier in this report. The 'situation room' will:

facilitate coordinated crisis response to sudden onset crises (e.g.: movement of population, pandemics, climate induced and other natural disasters, episodes of gross human rights violations). It will be a facility for briefings and coordination meetings. It will liaise with situation rooms in other UN entities. The Situation Room will eventually become the funnel through which re-designed information and data flows from the various FOTCD entities (geographic desks, ERTs and field presences) will be processed and redistributed within FOTCD and feed into early warning programmatic and prevention platforms (UNOCC, RMRs, IASC, CCAs, HRPs etc.).<sup>47</sup>

The ERTs themselves were broadly satisfied with the way that the overall communication structures surrounding their deployment were working. The evaluation team encountered some frustrations about micro-management by some Regional Representatives and the erosion of the 'space' that they needed to fulfil their core functions.<sup>48</sup> In interviews, some ERT staff also commented that it would be good to have more interaction with and field visits by the senior HQ staff. These complaints varied region by region and may partly be down to personnel or performance issues, which are beyond the scope of this evaluation to address. It is not uncommon to hear such sentiments expressed by the staff of organizations with large and growing field operations and so the evaluation team makes no finding or recommendation on these issues. As discussed above, the bigger concern that the evaluation team heard expressed was a lack of agreement about the ERTs conceptual clarity, core identity, purpose, functionality and added value.

The ERTs could also significantly improve their information dissemination and public advocacy strategies. Although one of the explicit goals of the ERTs, is to produce data in a visually attractive and compelling manner, the quality of some of their public reports and information was found to be quite variable.

**Evaluation Question 6:** *Was the results chain of actions, strategies and M&E on ERT correctly conceived in order to produce the expected outcomes? How effectively does ERS monitor and evaluate the performance and results? Is relevant information and data systematically collected and analysed to feed into management decisions?*

The ERT programme has used a broad conceptual approach to adapt to the different contexts where they operate. This flexibility has facilitated the positioning of each ERT within their RO. The M&E system of the programme is run individually for each of the teams within their ROs together with the HQ coordinated donor follow up reporting

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<sup>47</sup> Annual Work Plan - Emergency Response Section (2022)

<sup>48</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

systems. In the first instance, the internal programme monitoring system offers relevant objectives that could be adequate for measuring advance on the work of ERTs. This is for example the case of the peace and security pillar, PS5<sup>49</sup> that is currently used to measure the work of two of the longest established teams (SARO and SEARO) and which is also used by the ERS units. Other ERTs, such as West and Central Africa have used result PS3 of the same pillar while others, such as ROSA have used the OHCHR the Participation pillar (Enhance participation and protect civic space) and the Development pillar (Integrating human rights in sustainable development).

*Table 1. Sample of PMS outputs used in RO's reporting PS5 Pillar Peace and security*

<b>Process</b> <sup>50</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Information management system drawing information from multiple sources (UN, open source, NGOs, official data, regional indexes, etc.) is set up on selected countries to enable regular and up to date human rights and protection analysis that can feed UN decision-making at various levels and contexts (SARO)</li> <li>ii) OHCHR's emergency response teams progressively deployed at regional level to focus on early warning/early action and strengthen our capacity to ensure real time response to crises and disasters (SEARO).</li> <li>iii) Selected UNCTs are supported in analysing risks to human rights in line with HRuF and the prevention agenda</li> </ul>
<b>Output</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Human rights information and analysis, including early warning, is made available for use in decision-making, including for early action (SARO)</li> <li>ii) UNCTs and other stakeholders are equipped on HRBA/protection approaches to risk assessment and early warning to better respond to human rights and humanitarian crises (SARO)</li> <li>iii) Enhanced capacity at regional level to work on early warning and prevention, supported by the information management function. (SEARO)</li> <li>iv) Enhanced capacity of NHRIs in South and South East Asia to integrate human rights in humanitarian action. (SEARO)</li> <li>v) Regular public reports issued from all OHCHR field presences that will inform UN prevention strategies at the field, regional and HQ level (SEARO)</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Extent to which the UN guidelines on incorporating rights-based approaches have been applied by specific programmes of UN entities. (SARO)</li> <li>ii) OHCHR plays a more visible role in humanitarian action in the region and human rights is more regularly integrated into the work of the IASC (SEARO)</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	[none spotted]

Source: PMS End of year reports Regional offices SARO and SEARO

As the above table shows, the statements focus on the process level with some slight indications at Output level and one at Outcome level.<sup>51</sup> The evaluation team believes this approach to have been correct, considering the nature of the programme and the resources available, as an over ambitious set of objectives would distort the real potential of the programme (expected changes on how many crises have been averted

<sup>49</sup> Result level PS5: Human rights information and analyses are integrated in early warning and analysis systems and influence international and national policy-making, strategies and operations to prevent, mitigate or respond to emerging crises, including humanitarian crises and conflict

<sup>50</sup> Provided the nature of the programme the evaluation approaches the definition of process indicators as those referred to the implementation of activities.

<sup>51</sup> Note: indicators have been placed in the different categories following Human right indicators index definitions (OHCHR, 2013) and Better evaluation indicators typology criteria and do not match in many cases the category selected in the PMS [https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA\\_PM&E\\_toolkit\\_module\\_2\\_objectives&indicators\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA_PM&E_toolkit_module_2_objectives&indicators_for_publication.pdf)



is far beyond of the area of influence of the programme and it also falls under the non-measurable results category effects of the programme). The creation of six separate internal monitoring systems in different ROs does, however, cause some problems as discussed below, in comparison with more standard integrated monitoring schemes. From a systemic point of view this balance in favour of adaptation by the ERTs to their specific individual contexts has implied that the programme has not yet completed the experimental and adaptive philosophy approach with a ToC that sets up the overall frame of programme goals and the different pathways of change that can be taken to reach them. In interviews some individual ERT members welcomed this as a source of flexibility, but also noted that it could sometimes be problematic in pulling their resources and efforts into other areas of work within their different ROs.

In parallel to its in-house M&E systems the programme is also using results frameworks for certain of its activities funded by different donors. This is the case for UK and Sweden funded activities. In these cases, indicators proposed include both Outcome indicators (e.g.: SIDA Outcome I indicator on number of countries and RCs receiving early warning and prevention recommendations; UK outcome 'Number of field presences, investigative bodies, peacekeeping components, or responsible portfolio managers that use information management tools and services'). The quality of the indicators varies when running the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timetabled) criteria assessment (e.g.: outcome indicator 'Number of countries and RCOs/UNCTs in relevant regions receiving early warning and prevention recommendations on emerging patterns of human rights concerns' is not directly measuring its related outcome: 'Decision-makers at the global, national and regional level take preventative measures and early action to address serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law...'). However, two major challenges of these monitoring system are that they are led by and exclusive to the individual donors that are funding them and are mainly based on qualitative narratives in the reports, with insufficient quantitative-based Outcome results.

In recognition of these weaknesses, the programme is currently in the process of shifting from the pilot test approach to a second phase based increasingly on standardisation and common monitoring. The evaluation team supports this development especially in the view of the incorporation of the new ERTs in the second half of 2021 and the potential new ones to be set up in Ethiopia and Fiji. The programme is currently working on an internal periodic reporting and discussions are being held on both the identity of the ERTs as well as a potential pool of common products. This process requires the standardisation phase to be concluded beforehand and a strong buy in from the Programme Coordinator and the ERTs themselves.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> FGD exercises run during the evaluation show that alignment of terminology, products, core business areas understanding and mid-run focuses are a work in progress that is to be finished before the exercise of developing a useful theory of change can be implemented.

The evaluation team found five main challenges in the decentralised M&E system. Although these points are an open list it is important to note OHCHR is well aware of the challenges posed to the system by global crosscutting programmes in terms of offering a consistent global M&E solution.<sup>53</sup>

First of all, global crosscutting programmes like the ERTs exist in a vacuum that needs to adapt to the overall priorities in terms of M&E (organisational result-based management & country-based management) and be complemented at internal level to provide an effective programme result-based management. In all global programmes the differences in common outputs and results complicate the use of benchmarks and milestones at the programme level hindering clear common result-based system that crosscut across the regional monitoring.

Secondly, the general Outcome indicators from the PPMES system are designed to provide tailored measurement to OHCHR OMP. The nature of the programme and the ERTs functions triggering preventive mechanisms demand Output-based indicators. These should be considered a 'living document' and be open to tailoring, adaption and updates while remaining within the overall framework of OHCHR's objectives (e.g.: official indicator "# of countries of engagement where the number of human rights violation cases raised by OHCHR which are positively addressed by the government has significantly increased" can be adapted including the reference to early warning). At Output level, however, the ERTs need to develop their own internal measurement.

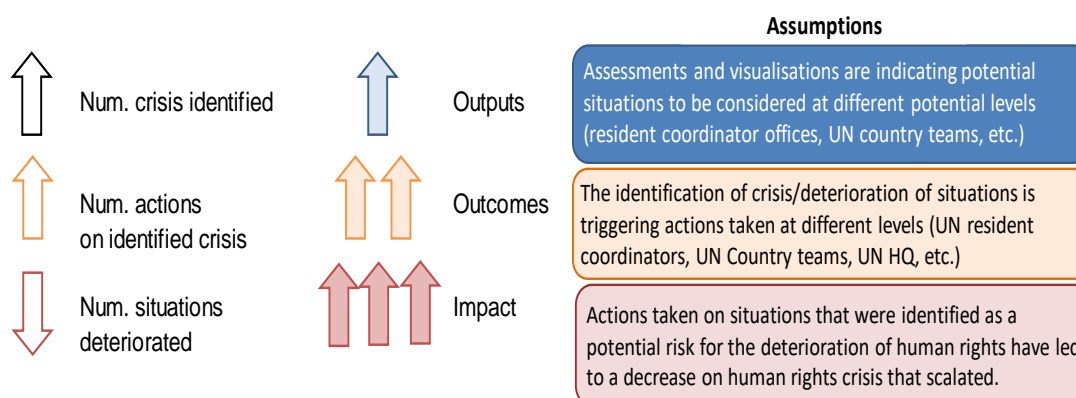
Thirdly, there was an over reliance on qualitative results with limited quantification: this challenge is embedded in the system which makes it difficult to add indicators at Output level that may include quantifications and the need to use the established set of indicators and results at Outcome level. The evaluation team has not encountered, for example, any indicator referring to the focus of early warning mechanisms - the quantification of how many of these potential 'crises' have been identified,<sup>54</sup> how many final identified situations led to a deterioration of human rights and/or how many crises went under the radar. These types of indicators can provide the programme a relevant methodological tool to advocate for their work as well as a circumvention to the difficulties of measuring normative work. The method is partially based on a negative Outcome measurement by deduction approach that provides as well effective tools for evidence-based decision making:

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<sup>53</sup> Field work identified the same challenges in similar programmes (e.g.: gender advisors)

<sup>54</sup> In this regard, and as noted in question one of this report, this challenge has as well its origins in the need of landing the conceptual approach to prevention formally providing the frame of the main pillars of action where teams can add a value according to the resources available and positioning them therefore, in the prevention ladder phase.

Figure 3. Example of intervention logic M&E deductive scheme



Source: evaluation

Fourthly, outputs included under the different programmatic documents are not always positive when running the SMART test and specificity and measurability are often the most common flaws of this set of results. For example, the indicators are often so broad that they include a process an Output and an Outcome all together within the same indicator (e.g.: OHCHR’s emergency response teams progressively deployed at regional level to focus on early warning/early action and strengthen our capacity to ensure real time response to crises and disasters). Finally, a number of statements are included as a result/objective at different levels (Output or Outcome) but are not complemented with indicators containing their baseline, targets, milestones and sources of information.

**Evaluation Question 7:** *What evidence can be found on the success in achieving the outcomes set in its guiding documents in the proposed timeline? Are there any unforeseen outcomes? Are the outcomes a result of the outputs and action of the project? What are the identified enabling factors and processes and the hindrances of results? Where positive results of the ERTs programme were found, what were the enabling factors and processes? What prevented the ERTs programme from achieving results?*

The ERTs have been rolled out since 2017 on a regional basis and this section includes a brief overview of their successes to date in achieving the Outcomes set out in their guiding documents. The information in this section has been drawn from narrative reports and triangulated through interviews with internal and external stakeholders. As can be seen, the achievements of the ERTs have been considerable despite some unforeseen circumstances of which the COVID19 pandemic was the most significant. The enabling factors and processes as well as the hindrances and setbacks have been discussed and contextualized in other findings of this report.

ROSA was OHCHR’s first ERT, established in October 2017. It covers 14 countries in the region and has focused, in particular, on political instability in Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe; electoral-related human rights concern in Malawi, South Africa, Comoros, Botswana, and Mozambique, the impact of cyclones affecting Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe; and food insecurity and drought across the region.

Climate change and COVID-19 have significantly exacerbated poverty and many countries in the region have experienced considerable political tension. Civil unrest in the provinces of Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng, in South Africa, cost approximately 342 people their lives in 2021. The ERT produced an analytical brief on this unrest, which was used internally in OHCHR and shared with the RC. The ERT also developed three advocacy briefs on the impact of COVID-19 on ESCR, highlighting the centrality of human rights in the socio-economic response. It produced separate briefings on the impact of COVID-19 on women in southern Africa and their right to participation in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts; and one on youth activism in the era of social media.

The ERT actively contributed to providing technical support to UNCTs in Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini, through providing human rights early warning analysis and also in the development of their CCAs and UNSDCFs. The ERT prepared a multidimensional risk assessment framework that was incorporated into the Zambia UNCT's CCA. The ERT also contributed to an LNOB analysis for the Zambia CCA, provided inputs on civil, political and socio-economic rights related risks and concerns. The ERT regularly contributed to UNOCC reports, Deputies' meetings and RMRs, including country specific and regional meetings and reviews. The ERT prepared and submitted eight inputs for the UNOCC on the human rights situation in Eswatini and Zambia, which were included in the UNOCC daily updates. The ERT also inputted into the OCHA Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa and provided updates to the IASC regional Early Warning, Early Action monthly scans.

In Zambia, the ERT set up and operationalized a Prevention Platform in the context of general elections of 2021. Four situational reports were produced and shared with the UN system. A further 16 media monitoring reports were shared with the RC, which were disseminated to the UNCT. The ERT also contributed to the UNOCC enhanced monitoring that was activated in August of that year immediately before and after the elections. The ERT produced three analytical updates on human rights concerns and key issues to watch for during the electoral period, as well as on socio economic risks due to COVID-19. These were disseminated widely to relevant stakeholders by the RC. The ERT also produced two country risk assessment on Eswatini and Angola. Twelve media monitoring reports of the situation in Eswatini were also produced for internal OHCHR use. A briefing note on Comoros was also provided to the UN ASG.

The SEARO ERT was established in 2018 and is based in Bangkok. It is responsible for covering both South Asia and South-East Asia – with the exception of Cambodia and Afghanistan, which respectively have an OHCHR Country Office and the human rights component an SPM. In practice the ERT's main focus is Southeast Asia as South Asia is hugely different in both geographical, historical and political contexts. For this reason, the evaluation team believe that a separate ERT should be created to cover this region. The key human rights risks in the Southeast Asia region in 2021 were in relation to

restrictions on civic space, political instability and threats to those involved in pro-democracy movements, weaknesses in justice and rule of law systems and the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been crackdowns on pro-democracy movements and CSOs, which was most starkly shown in Myanmar following the coup in February 2021. The ERT provided information management support to the OHCHR Myanmar Team, which significantly contributed to their public reporting, including to the UN HRC. It also persuaded the RC to establish an inter-agency early warning system for the UNCT, which provided an update on human rights developments at each monthly UNCT meeting (the first of its kind globally).<sup>55</sup> The ERT is also discussing the establishment of a similar platform with the Lao RCO. The ERT has also provided support in monitoring and reporting on situations of heightened tensions in countries in the region including in Thailand where pro-democracy protesters have faced a growing violent crackdown. The ERT drafted five human rights situation reports in the first quarter of 2021, when tensions were at the highest point.

The SEARO ERT has also run a capacity building course on human rights in humanitarian action for NHRIs together with the APF. An interview conducted with an NHRI in the field confirmed the value and usefulness of the material provided and the importance of ensuring that NHRIs which are often ignored by international humanitarian agencies, are at the center of humanitarian responses, particularly in regard to the protection of affected vulnerable groups. Interviewees also stated that this approach taken by the programme on adapting to the context has played to the strengths of the specific ERT. The SEARO ERT has produced 12 human rights updates on the situation in Papua region, in Indonesia, as well as drafting a trend analysis report for the UN global level prevention mechanisms. Attacks on political protesters and armed clashes in Papua including aerial bombardments have resulted in thousands of people in remote rural areas being displaced and requiring humanitarian assistance. The ERT also established a dashboard, which provides updates on trends for armed clashes, displacement, demonstrations and reported incidents of violence against civilians. There have also been increased restrictions on freedom of expression, throughout the region, sometimes under the guise of combating disinformation about COVID-19. In Vietnam, for example, a number of people have been imprisoned for criticizing the COVID-19 response and vaccination plans. The ERT established a database on freedom of expression online in countries in Southeast Asia, together with DPPA, which will be used for raising awareness internally in the UN on one of the critical human rights problems in the region.

The SEARO ERT facilitated sessions on prevention and human rights risk analysis for the UN in Nepal, Iran and the Maldives, in addition to providing inputs to draft CCA's for Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan, and the Pacific in 2021. The ERT drafted 12 update reports for the UNOCC daily on developing situations of concern in countries in South-East Asia. As part of the UN Regional Coordination Forum and the Issue-Based Coalition

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<sup>55</sup> This platform continues to operate though it was noted during interviews that the change in RC in the country resulted in a diminished interaction and joint analytical power.

on Building Resilience (IBC), the ERT effectively integrated human rights into the UN's regional work on disaster risk and resilience including the development of a risk marker for the UN at country level and developing a guidance note on disaster resilient infrastructure. A Regional crisis risk dashboard (CRD) is being developed (currently as a prototype) through an iterative inclusive process by a technical working group in which OHCHR participates. The ERT worked with UN regional partners in supporting the establishment of a COP for UN partners working on hate speech.

The ERT for West Africa was created in August 2019 and covers all countries in the sub-region, adding value by providing regional trends and analysis. For country-specific work, the WARO ERT focuses on the countries where there is no OHCHR Country Office or human rights component of a UN Mission: Benin, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. The WARO ERT produces a daily newsletter covering major developments in these countries as well as regular more in-depth reports. For example, in 2021, the ERT produced five monthly, one trimonthly, two bimonthly early warning media analysis. It has worked closely with journalists and CSOs to monitor hate speech in the region which has been a worrying trend in a number of elections. In Gambia the ERT supported the consolidation and coordination of regular internal weekly reports on the situation in the country during the presidential elections of late 2021 and provided inputs to the UNOCC's enhanced monitoring procedures and the RMR country scan. This led to a recommendation for stronger human rights presence in the country in the context of Presidential elections scheduled in December 2021 and ERT. The ERT deployed to Gambia at the request of the RC to undertake human rights monitoring in the electoral context. The ERT, in collaboration with UNOWAS, UNDP and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, ran a training course for 75 journalists on identifying and countering inciteful language and hate speech.

The ERT also monitored the presidential elections in Benin in March 2021 and shared information management and data collection on early warning and presentation. In Senegal, the ERT has produced situational analyses on political demonstrations which were incorporated into the UNOCC's own reports. The ERT created a COVID-19 dashboard to provide daily visual updates on developments relating to the pandemic in the region. It also enhanced its daily media monitoring, and monthly media analysis using the RMR risk framework. The ERT produced an annual West Africa Early Warning Media Analysis and corresponding visualisations in 2020. The ERT also provided targeted human rights risk analysis inputs to the CCA process, the UNOCC and other early warning and prevention processes. The ERT trained more than 50 members of NHRIs in Gambia, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad, and introduced OHCHR's risk analysis and early warning and prevention methodologies to them. The ERT has also engaged with ECOWAS on their early warning system (ECOWARN), with the aim of enhancing the integration of human rights information and analysis. The ERT identified entry points in the process of the internal ECOWARN review process and

engaged in technical discussions with West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP) and the National Early Warning and Early Response Centres of ECOWARN.

The ERT for Central Africa was created in June 2021, alongside a project, which aims to integrate human rights into the socio-economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic by governments, NHRIs, CSOs and UNCTs. Recruitment and deployment of the team has, however, been subject to a number of delays. CARO focusses on six countries where OHCHR has no FP: Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo and Sao Tome and Principe. The ERT has carried out some consultations and training, including a high-level workshop in August 2021, on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups in Yaoundé, Cameroon and similar events in Congo, in September, and Gabon in December. In October 2021, the ERT held a Zoom webinar on the evaluation of building early warning mechanisms in Central Africa, together with the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Coalition of civil society organizations for peace and conflict and prevention in Central Africa (*Coalition des organisations de la société civile pour la paix et la prévention des conflits en Afrique centrale* -COPAC). Similar events have also been held in Gabon and Cameroon.

The Central America ERT became fully operational in November 2021. ROCA covers five countries: Panama, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Nicaragua. It monitored human rights violations that occurred throughout the electoral process in Nicaragua in November 2021, creating a factsheet with infographics and charts that was widely disseminated on social media and amongst the diplomatic community. It also helped to produce information used to brief the UN HRC in March 2022. The ERT conducted a joint monitoring mission with an NHRI in the area at the border between Colombia and Panama and also conducted a mission to San Salvador to meet with CSOs and the NHRI which is planning to build its own emergency response system. The ERT has set also up a tracking system in prioritized countries that can produce risk analysis for feeding into the UN early warning system.

The ERT for South America was fully established with the recruitment of a HRO in December 2021 and so is the youngest of the ERTs. ROSA covers six countries in the region: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay. In the limited period of time since its creation, the ERT has established an open-source information collection systems and definition of key support areas for the above countries and identified initial cross cutting themes to support in the region including civic space, rights of indigenous peoples, land and housing, migration, institutional violence and impacts of climate change and disaster management. The ERT has also set up Real time monitoring of social unrest and elections in the initial months of operation in Ecuador, Peru and Chile. The ERT worked with the country HRA to produce a revised and updated report on mass forced evictions in Paraguay, with strong visual imagery showing the distress that these have caused. The report was presented in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

(IACHR) and used for advocacy in various arenas. The Government of Paraguay subsequently established a country-wide working group on the issue – the first ever to have addressed the issue of forced evictions. In Brazil the ERTs has been working on data collection for the CCA process in relation to the forthcoming Presidential and parliamentary elections.

**Evaluation Question 8:** *How balanced and adapted to context are the resources and processes available considering expected results and performance indicators? Have these achieved value for money?*

This question has been assessed looking at the principles of sound financial management: Economy, efficiency, effectiveness and Equity being applied through a light assessment of four areas of finances (operational management, cost-effectiveness, results-based management and budgeting and social value for money).<sup>56</sup> Results show a good value for money project where operational management and funds traceability is well ensured but where limited human resources are tensioned from a number of pulling factors that limit the potential effectiveness of the distinguishing skills of teams.<sup>57</sup> These pulling factors include the scope of their geographical and thematical mandates inserted as well in a vast scope of actions and related needs of OHCHR field presences within their regional structures.

Disaggregating the analysis by items, from an operational management angle, the programme is considered as a WC project in UMOJA (all donors pooling resources together in the same bank account) making procedures much simpler and allowing flexibility to teams in spending between budget lines within the margins of the funds. Value for money measures are mentioned in procurement centralised purchasing process of assets of certain value (specially computers and vehicles) that entail benefiting from economies of scale. Additionally, OHCHR applies a post adjustment salary in order to align wages to the purchasing power of the staff location. Finally, it is to note that as in the case of country offices, regional offices are regulated by UNDP financial and procurement strategic policies and services on human resources procedures that in principle ensure best value for money but overall entail a sound process financial traceability.

The evaluation team was not able to crosscheck financial specificities for each of the ROs where ERTs are located but no specific hindrances or big challenges have been mentioned apart from those related to human resources process time length. Regarding the balance of the budget<sup>58</sup> and taking 2022 as a case study<sup>59</sup> is in its vast majority devoted

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<sup>56</sup> de la Concha, J. (2020). A Review of the DAC Evaluation Criteria: Upgrading Efficiency. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, 16(34), 44–55. Retrieved from [https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde\\_1/article/view/587](https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/587)

<sup>57</sup> This question together with question 5 (communication and coordination items in-house and externally) touches upon the main items of consideration of the efficiency criterion included under the OHCHR guidance for the preparation of evaluation reports. Following OHCHR guidance ToRs question 6 on monitoring has been shifted under the coherence criteria.

<sup>58</sup> Pure cost-efficiency assessment is adapted assessing the balance of the budget, the adequacy of human resources and the existing synergies the programme.

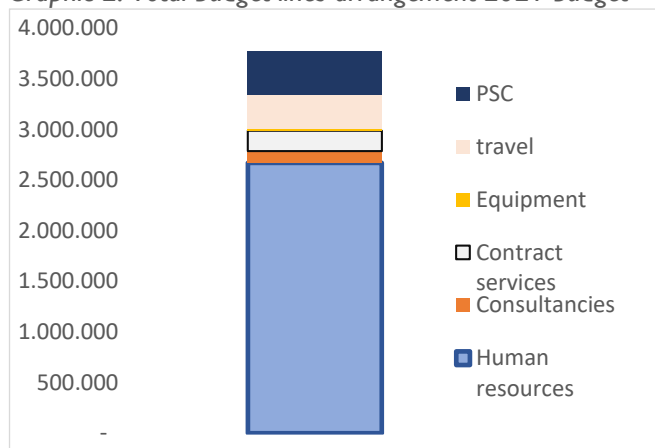
<sup>59</sup> 2022 was selected considering the full potential comparability between all teams.



to human resources (approximate 75% of resources) followed very far by travelling (5%) and consultancies (4%).<sup>60</sup>

Breaking down the assessment per ERTs and ERS it is relevant to note the overall balanced budgets between ERTs both in terms of percentages by budget lines and in total terms. Only ERS human resources break this balance with over two thirds more budget on human resources from the IMDA unit (four staff) and ERS coordination.

Graphic 2. Total budget lines arrangement 2021 budget



Source: 2021 approved budget. Internal documentation

The ERTs consist of two staff: one IMO and one HRO. Job descriptions are quite general including mainly pure technical duties to IMOs

(data coordination, data management, data analysis, GIS and visualisation) and very substantive and job-related duties to HROs (Early warning duties quite breakdown together with a category called provision of guidance and support to partners that include a wide array of duties ranging from deployment of emergency capacities to assistance to NHRIs and integration of human rights in humanitarian responses). In several instances the roles of IMOs have included or have evolved to embed substantial thematical coverage. The evaluation team considers this broadening of skills and tasks to be a positive development which should be supported by in-house training.

Regarding the balance between the number of staff and the duties the evaluation extracts the following circumstances that are common across the teams: i) there are a number of pulling factors (from ROs, HQ and FPs) in general that add more duties to both the IMO and the HRO on top of their agendas; ii) HROs acknowledge the current impossibility of covering the three pillars of their mandate (early warning, humanitarian action and emergency response); iii) the geographical scope of the teams is in all cases so wide it needs a prioritisation of countries of coverage where the staff can focus their resources.

Nonetheless, and despite the acute disproportion between resources and mandates the evaluation has pinpointed several examples of good leverage of in-house resources where ERTs are triggering the prevention potential of OHCHR field presences (see the cases of Zambia, Paraguay, Myanmar, etc.) though a two-ways collaboration framework where field presences provide their field know-how and positioning and ERTs add their added value in terms of methodological and conceptual approaches and/or technical information management skills. These examples show the path to follow in terms of efficiency with relation to effectiveness though as outlined in question two on coordination with other areas of the organisation and field presences several interviewees remarked how leverage of in-house resources depends on the specific

<sup>60</sup> Excluding the 13% agreed to PSC

sensibilities and alliances of individuals in the field. Thus, for example HRAs do not have in their mandate the function of monitoring and are hierarchically dependent to RCs and therefore collaboration with ERTs is ascertained on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, and regarding result-based budgeting (effectiveness) and social value for money (equity): the evaluation has identified some attempts in the budget and financial documents to link budget lines with activities (including gender and leave no one behind). However, the nature of this programme with a strong share of expenditure on human resources that apply horizontally to all outcomes render the exercise futile and therefore, budget balance is only possible to assess from a time consumption angle of human resources. Another relevant example in this regard is the development of the curricula for NHRIs jointly by METS and SEARO ERT developed to strengthen human rights-based approaches into humanitarian responses in the Southeast Asia and Pacific region.

**Evaluation Question 9:** *To what extent are the ERTs programmes making – or could make in the future – a significant contribution to broader and longer-term enjoyment of rights?*

The ERTs are a new programme for OHCHR, and some have only been in existence for less than a year. It is, therefore, perhaps too early to be able to prove their impact on the long-term enjoyment of human rights. The rationale of the programme and its explicit linkages to HRUF and the prevention agenda also differentiate it from a long-term development approach to the protection and promotion of human rights. The evaluation team believes though that, through the predictable production of human rights risk analyses for UN FPs and OHCHR HQ, the ERTs have considerable potential to make a significant contribution to improving the UN's own situational awareness and helping it respond more effectively to potential crises.

By operationalizing the commitments that the UN adopted in the HRUF policy and has reaffirmed since, the programme is leveraging the prevention agenda to enhance the broader protection and promotion of human rights. By promoting UN inter-entity cooperation and collaboration on early warning early action, the ERTs are helping to build a common information and analysis system within the UN from the field level up. While the ERTs have not developed a formal ToC or intervention logic the evaluation team did find evidence that the ERTs Outputs – in the form of reports, visuals, training events and seminars, and other forms of networking are leading to tangible Outcomes that are strengthening human rights. The evaluation team believe that building on these achievements will require the development of better communication strategies and better M&E systems with basic indicators on results.

In many of the countries where the ERTs are operating there is limited knowledge within the UN system on the relevance and importance of human rights in early warning and prevention. In other countries, due to political sensitivities associated with human rights work, the UN system is sometimes reluctant to adopt a holistic approach to systematically monitor and document these concerns, and to identify and address their root causes through the establishment of early warning structures and preventative action. Political sensitivities in Southeast Asia, for example has made some UNCTs very wary of working on human rights issues. The Prevention Platforms and the RMR processes have been used very effectively by the ERT to leverage support for regional

level collaboration with other UN entities and gain political support from UN HQ in New York.

In Southern Africa, where the ERT has been established the longest, it now routinely contributes to UNOCC reports, Deputies' meetings and RMRs by providing inputs to matrices of recommendations on the broader Southern Africa region. The ERT has also forged valuable links with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Continental Early Warning System of the African Union (AU). These regional institutions are, however, weak and lacking in capacity. Some were accused of operating with excessive bureaucracy and a lack of transparency by interviewees, who questioned the potential impact of working with them. Nevertheless, ERT interventions in Southern Africa have led to some tangible Outcomes strengthening human rights protection. In 2020 the ERT delivered a case study on how to conduct human rights risk analysis as part of a course delivered in collaboration with the AU, OHCHR, the World Bank and the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre. In 2019 it undertook a protection mapping study to ascertain the nature of stakeholders working through protection working groups in the region, which strengthened relations, collaboration and information sharing with humanitarian agencies such as WFP, IOM, WHO, MSF, ICRC, IFCR, UNFPA Regional, CARE International, and Protection Clusters and Working Groups in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. This helped to facilitate three interventions – in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique – where the ERTs can convincingly claim to have helped the UN to make a significant contribution to a broader and longer-term enjoyment of human rights.

In Zimbabwe, in 2019, the ERT's reports, and analysis helped to inform the production of an analytical report by the HRA focused on the socioeconomic situation and its impact on civil and political rights. There had been three crackdowns against protestors by the police in August 2018, and then again in January and August 2019. The OHCHR's reports fed into the UN's early warning tool and RMR risk factor framework and Zimbabwe was included in a RMR discussion in New York. A new RC arrived in the country at around the same time and proved open to this approach. The RMR recommended, amongst other things, that an inter-agency mission visit Zimbabwe to support the new RC and the UNCT in addressing prevention concerns. OHCHR HQ in Geneva issued press briefings on the protests and also arranged country visits by two Special Rapporteurs – one on the right to freedom of assembly and association and one on the right to food. OHCHR's Surge capacity helped to brief the two Rapporteurs on relevant economic, social and cultural rights. The inter-agency mission took place in March 2020, supported by the HRA and the PDA, meeting a wide range of actors, and subsequently produced a set of preventive recommendations including a strengthened human rights presence, the development of a UNCT long-term prevention strategy, an analysis platform and a strengthened understanding of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) violations as drivers of violence and unrest.

In Malawi, the ERT developed and provided technical cooperation and guidance to the RC and UNCT to establish and operationalize the Malawi Prevention Platform in the run-up to the elections in May 2019. It also provided support to the HRA in Malawi with remote monitoring, the use of information management tools and the production of analysis, including graphs and visuals using the prevention platform data, which were used to produce weekly briefings for the UNCT and to inform UN decision making in the country. As previously discussed, this platform proved to be a valuable early warning

tool when it was activated in early 2020 and probably helped to prevent widespread civil conflict. The ERT has since reviewed and revised the platform to adjust to the changing socio-economic and electoral context in Malawi. It is difficult to definitively describe that the lack of violence was an impact of the ERT programme, but the evaluation team do believe that this was a positive Outcome.

In Mozambique, the ERT's monitoring and documentation of the onset of instability within Cabo Delgado, as well as in relation to the peace agreements and general elections in October 2019 included regular missions to the field, forging links with the UNCT and the re-establishment of the Human Rights Working Group in the country. Joint assessments were undertaken with UNDP to explore joint programming and a joint mission was also conducted with DPA and OCHAs. The analysis and situational updates developed by the ERT supported OHCHR's advocacy to the rest of the UN system and fed into UNOCC and RMR processes. The ERT also worked closely with humanitarian actors in Mozambique as discussed in previous findings.

It was difficult for the evaluation team to definitively assess the impact of the initiatives described in this section and some of the others of this report as OHCHR's own internal M&E systems for the ERTs do not contain all the necessary basic indicators required. It seems likely, however, that better monitoring would conclude that these initiatives do at least have the potential for such impact. The ERTs are helping to make OHCHR a more results-based and analytical organization and a number of donors told the evaluation team that they felt that the ERTs were contributing to a changing culture, which was moving away from its 'traditional' focus on servicing Geneva-based reporting mechanisms to a greater emphasis on achieving results in the field.

The general feedback that the evaluation team received about the ERTs was also positive. Most UN staff interviewed working in Geneva and New York clearly appreciated the information, analysis and networking that the ERTs were able to undertake in particular regions, and some described themselves as 'champions' of the programme.<sup>61</sup> The ERTs also meet a demand of the UN system at HQ and senior decision-makers for data-driven analytics, and that this has the potential to help OHCHR to be more influential in New York and in influencing systemwide action. OHCHR Regional Representatives all reported themselves as very satisfied with the ERTs with one noting that: 'I often have my differences with decisions made by HQ in Geneva, but the deployment of the ERTs meets with my full approval'.<sup>62</sup> Another said that 'I cannot overstate the value of the ERT in my region. They have done an amazing job and really added value to our work. They are a perfect fit for our office.'<sup>63</sup> While such comments are impressionistic and difficult to triangulate, they do seem to indicate a basic satisfaction with the programme.

**Evaluation Question 10:** *What are the main challenges for sustainability of the different parts of the programme? Which have been the main successes? Are local stakeholders able and committed to continue working on the issues addressed by the ERTs? How effectively have they built national ownership and necessary capacity?*

The ERTs have strengthened the capacity of OHCHR's ROs to monitor and respond to human rights violations in their regions. They have also strengthened the work of RCs,

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<sup>61</sup> Interviews conducted, June 2022.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

UNCTs, HCTs HRAs, gender advisors and PDAs to monitor and respond to these violations at the field and HQ level. The evaluation teams also encountered several examples where the work of local stakeholders – particularly NHRIs and humanitarian actors – has been strengthened by the work of the ERTs. The overriding objective of the programme is to ensure that ‘UNCTs and other stakeholders are equipped on HRBA/protection approaches to risk assessment and early warning to better respond to human rights and humanitarian crises’ which is, by its very nature, a sustainable objective.

The evaluation team is concerned, however, that the ERT programme in its current form is too fragmented and reliant on extra budgetary support and a multiplicity of external donors. SIDA provides non-earmarked funds to the programme, and is its largest single donor, but most donors are increasingly ear-marking their funding, in response to pressures that they face from their own internal processes. OHCHR should ideally aim to find a way of bringing the programme as a whole in-house and supporting it under its XB unearmarked core funding. This will obviously require the support of the international donor community. The ERTs fundraising activity to date has been impressive, as shown by the multiple donors supporting it, but a number of interviewees stated that OHCHR could be ‘more ambitious’ in its thinking considering the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and impact orientation of the programme and its gender and disability inclusiveness.

As previously discussed, the ERT programme has been fully integrated into OHCHR’s OMP and is fully relevant to its mandate and its internal prevention strategy. Beyond this, though, the evaluation team believe that the ERTs are also relevant to the UN SDGs, HRUF and the Prevention Platform, taking into account OHCHR’s comparative advantages. The value of the ERTs was recognized by internal and external interviewees throughout the wider UN system. OHCHR SMT should be approaching both donors and other UN entities to take a more ambitious approach to sustaining and expanding the programme.

In interviews with the programme’s principal external donors, it was clear that while there was general satisfaction with the ERTs broad Outcomes, OHCHR could sometimes do a better job at reporting on progress against outputs from the programme’s original phase and the results framework from the post-2020 phase of COVID response developments. There were also instances where it was noted that programme documents and reporting could better identify and analyze risks. The evaluation team also notes that reports to donors are fully narrative and descriptive and include no visuals that can present the information in a more analytical and product-oriented manner, particularly considering the information management skills that the ERTs contain and how this is widely recognized as one of the added values of the programme. A single consolidated report, focused on the OHCHR Prevention agenda which incorporated the programme’s objectives, Outcomes and Impact could usefully complement or replace these individual narrative reports.

Some donors also felt that OHCHR could be better coordinating with and between donors to try to secure more flexible funding and resources and engage constructively with their efforts to promote reform in the broader UN system. OHCHR currently hosts two round table donor meetings per year, which provides an opportunity for donors to discuss the programme collectively, as several bilateral consultations. The

evaluation team were impressed with the efforts that the ERT Programme Coordinator and DEXREL currently put into donor liaison. Donors were conscious of the UN's internal hierarchies and a tendency for different entities to 'stove-pipe' between its HQ and FP levels. It was felt that the ERTs, as a new and still emerging, global programme had great potential to promote inter-entity cooperation around data collection, management and information sharing on Early Warning, Early Action.

The evaluation team also believe that OHCHR should be seeking synergies and forms of formal collaboration and cooperation with other UN entities working on similar issues – such as UNDP, DPPA, DCO, UNOCC and OCHA – with a view to building a single common system for data collection, management and analysis in the field of Early Warning, Early Action. The evaluation team encountered a number of good examples of inter-entity cooperation at both the field and HQ level, but much of this was established through inter-personal connections rather than through formal institutional mechanisms. The evaluation team believe that this could be built on – in the original spirit of the HRUF initiative – through the development of a common information management and situational awareness structure to 'strengthen prevention of serious concerns that cut across the UN's three pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights . . . prevent the most serious life-threatening violations [and] to realize a cultural change within the UN system . . . [which should] act with moral courage to prevent serious and large-scale violations'.<sup>64</sup>

The obvious challenge to such a strategy is that the UN is financially constrained and has been forced to make large cutbacks to several budgets in recent years. As has previously been argued, however, the transition away from large PKOs, which at their peak involved the deployment of over 100,000 uniformed personnel with Chapter VII authority from the Security Council, has brought considerable financial savings and investing only a fraction of those resources in human rights situational analysis, Early Warning, Early Action and Prevention could easily fund an initiative based on the ERT through inter-entity cooperation and collaboration.

**Evaluation Question 11:** *Have gender and leave no one behind principles been correctly included in all programme cycles from design to implementation and M&E set up?*

As observed throughout this report the programme is at the forefront of LNOB and gender mainstreaming at the global UN level as one of OHCHR's cutting-edge tools to raise awareness and open entry points to these principles worldwide. These two principles are embedded in the general objective of the programme of integrating human rights into UN and other actors' decision making and preventive mechanisms. Several workplans of ERTs include for example reference in their outputs to the support provided to 'CFs and CCA through knowledge-sharing exercises as well as inputs and comments on integrating HRBA and LNOB and risk analysis as well in UNCTs programming documents'.<sup>65</sup>

The programme has used LNOB principles as the main entry point for integrating human rights-based perspective into planning and decision-making mechanisms of UN in the field. LNOB is the cornerstone of the whole array of human rights of vulnerable

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<sup>64</sup> "New UN 'Rights Up Front' Strategy Seeks to Prevent Genocide, Human Rights Abuses," UN News, December 18, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> End of Year Progress report - Regional Office for West Africa (2021)

communities that included not only first generation of political and civil human rights together with the second generation of economic, social and cultural human rights but also third generation of minority and cultural human rights. Some examples on leave no one behind and gender perspective lenses spotted through the desk review reflect the diverse nature and importance of these principles in the work of ERTs. Triangulating and assessing identified examples through the field work the evaluation has found the following open list of categories:

- i) Gender and LNOB activities based on general integration into management and programmatic mechanisms of UN action (e.g.: On 18 October 2021, CARO made a submission to an UN interagency review that sought to assess the integration of human rights, LNOB and gender in the new generation of CCAs and CFs developed up to the mid-2021);
- ii) Networking with regional actors on the integration of these principles into their early warning systems (e.g.: (integrating a human rights-based approach with an adequate focus on gender and on economic, social and cultural rights into ECOWARN by WARO ERT);
- iii) Implementation of specific gender assessments to ensure LNOB and gender perspectives during specific crisis (e.g.: the assessment carried on the impact of COVID19 on women in Southern Africa and their right to participation in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts);
- iv) Support to specific UN agencies within the UNCT (e.g.: WARO OHCHR provided financial support to the UN Women/UNICEF Rapid Assessment Survey on the Socio-Economic Effects of COVID-19 from a gender perspective in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal, for which the ERT developed a visual snapshot of key findings);
- v) Development of partnerships working towards LNOB and gender protection (e.g.: growing partnership between CARO, UN Women and the Network of Women Parliamentarian of Cameroon for the promotion and protection of vulnerable women's rights in the context of COVID-19 in Cameroon; and
- vi) LNOB and gender used as the entry point to all the array of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of vulnerable communities (e.g.: the work of ERTs in the South America context using a leave no one behind has opened the door to the focus on other rights of vulnerable groups highlighting problems such as evictions).

OHCHR METS is also including gender-based considerations and LNOB principles in the development of sets of potential risk factors and indicators that can be used at global, regional and country levels to flag trends that may lead to deterioration of human right violations. These risk factors and indicators are part of METS developing and updating of OHCHR guidance on early warning analysis (e.g.: the participation of women in public life, and horizontal inequalities that may reflect discrimination towards specific vulnerable groups in society, among other indicators) and also employed by ERTs themselves as part of their data collection efforts.

OHCHR FPs and RCs also gave several examples of LNOB and gender awareness and sensitivity in cases of indigenous populations in South America and SGBV concerns in Southeast Asia countries as well as the specific gender and inter-ethnic focuses of hate speech in West Africa. ERT scanning, monitoring and assessments appears to have been effective in highlighting these issues. The evaluation team nevertheless believes that there

are some areas where integration of gender mainstreaming and LNOB principles could be improved:

- i) the programme has incorporated LNOB and gender awareness principles in specific assessments to be fed to external programmatic documents, but the evaluation team did not see these subsequently appear in RO documents or the PMS system.
- ii) the programme does include specific LNOB and gender awareness principles in the M&E specific measurement of results and indicators.
- iii) reporting documents do not include LNOB or a gender specific section that can highlight and pinpoint actions and results in this area.

### 3. Lessons Learned

OHCHR has deployed the ERTs in a wide range of different regions whose countries and UN FPs span the spectrum from full-scale conflict to post-conflict, fragile and developing states. It is doubtful that a 'one size fits all' formulation could be designed to accommodate such differences in a meaningful or helpful way compared to the flexibility of the current arrangements. Nevertheless, a more standardized design could be developed for deployments with a set of options, adaptable to particular circumstances but which ensures a greater global consistency in prioritization and reporting.

OHCHR needs to better understand the risks associated with using non-traditional data sets and sources (including quality, coverage, provenance and construct validity), which requires experience and training. The ERTs would benefit from more consistent practice in assessing and using external data sets, as well as improved data governance to include these assessments in the associated metadata.

OHCHR does not envisage the ERTs as simply data collection and analysis bodies. They are physically located in regions where the crises that they are monitoring are likely to occur in order to strengthen OHCHR's FPs and their potential leverage with UNCTs and RCs. The ERTs also work within the nexus between humanitarian, peace and development actors.

OHCHR's use of the term 'Emergency Response Teams' may give a misleading impression of their actual purpose and functions. While the name clearly associates the teams with the ERS, it could lead to confusion with OHCHR's roster deployment and other crisis response mechanisms. This could be addressed through a new 'branding' and re-prioritization of the ERT's work or else a reconceptualization of these terms in which the ERTs, through its data, collection, management and analysis are considered facilitators of OHCHR's broader humanitarian engagement and capacity crisis response.

OHCHR could potentially strengthen its engagement with humanitarian actors through working with the IASC's regional structures, the GPC and specific Protection Clusters



in targeted countries, including on emergency preparedness, gender and community engagement.

OHCHR needs to continue considering holistically how the work of the ERTs inter-relates with the rest of the UN system, including inter-entity bodies such as the GFP, fora such as the PBC and parallel organizations such as the JCSC to better coordinate rapid deployment of personnel and resources during human rights crises.

OHCHR could do better at reporting on progress against outputs from the programme documents and identifying and analyzing risks. Reports to donors are also too narrative and descriptive and could be presented in a more analytical and visually attractive format. It could consider producing a single report for donors on the whole prevention agenda,

OHCHR could be better coordinating with and between donors to keep them regularly informed about changing situations, work with them to secure flexible funding and resources and engage constructively with their efforts to promote reform in the broader UN system focused on the prevention agenda.

OHCHR could improve the support and guidance it gives to new staff who join the ERT programme.

#### 4. Emerging Good Practices

The ERTs have strengthened the capacity of OHCHR's RO's and FPs and the wider UN system to both anticipate and respond to human rights crises and prevent violent conflicts. They are making an extremely significant contribution to the UN's prevention agenda.

Through the predictable production of human rights risk analyses for UN FPs and OHCHR HQ the ERTs have helped to improve the UN's own situational awareness, which could help it respond more effectively to potential crises.

By operationalizing the commitments that the UN adopted in the HRUF policy and has reaffirmed since, the ERT programme is leveraging the prevention agenda to enhance the broader protection and promotion of human rights.

By promoting UN inter-entity cooperation and collaboration on early warning early action, the ERTs are helping to build a common information and analysis system within the UN from the field level up.

The ERTs are helping to make OHCHR a more results-based and analytical organization, moving away from its 'traditional' focus on servicing Geneva-based reporting mechanisms to a greater emphasis on achieving results in the field.

By more consistently engaging with a wider range of potential stakeholders within the UN system the ERTs are helping to show OHCHR's relevance to the development of situational analysis, Early Warning, Early Action and the prevention agenda within the wider UN system.

The partnerships established at the field level between the ERTs, and other UN entities have helped to shape their priorities and agendas in a responsive manner. OHCHR is gaining increasing access to the field-level discussions of the RCs and HCs, UNCTs, humanitarian Protection Clusters as a result of the work of its FPs, including the ERTs.

Given the different contextual backgrounds in which they are deployed, the nature, tasks and priorities of each ERT need to be determined by the Regional Representative with considerable autonomy, but the direct reporting line to the head of the ERS is important in ensuring that the ERTs retain their distinct functionality.

The IMOs of the ERTs have helped them to provide more effective visual imagery of potential and actual human rights crises in a way that makes information gathered for Early Warning and Early Action purposes easy to absorb and understand by UN FPs and other partners.

Communication and coordination amongst the ERTs in the ROs and the ERS in Geneva and PSPS in New York have generally been good considering the rather fragmented, horizontal and overlapping structures that exist, both within OHCHR and in the wider UN system. The ERT Programme Coordinator has provided the ERTs with dedicated effective support on programmatic issues and also ensures that regular exchanges are organized, such as monthly calls and the COP as well as 'representing' the ERTs within ERS and OHCHR.

The growing connection between the ERTs and OHCHR's embedded human rights capacity in the UNOCC has helped to raise the profile of situations of concern for UNHQ decision-making through the work of the Human Rights Analyst. This has helped to leverage ERT analysis in the RMR process and represent a productive way by which OHCHR can use data-driven human rights analysis to better influence the rest of the UN system to undertake human rights-based preventive action.

## 5. Conclusions

The ERTs are an innovative development within the work of OHCHR, which potentially provide an important tool to promote reform within the broader UN system. By identifying trends, assessed risks and prevention efforts, they are helping to promote both situational awareness and Early Warning and Early Action. They are also encouraging greater inter-entity cooperation around the prevention agenda, at the field level, based on OHCHR's recognized expertise as the world's leading entity on the promotion and protection of IHRL. The ERTs have already made a significant contribution to a 'cultural change' in the work of OHCHR, reinforcing a long-term trend, as it becomes more field orientated and responsive to developing potential and actual human rights crises. They are also helping to make OHCHR a more results-based and analytical organization, with a greater emphasis on achieving results in the field. This evaluation makes a series of Recommendations for strengthening their work based on a continued expansion of the programme.

## 6. Recommendations

### Summary Recommendations

1. OHCHR should proactively coordinate with and between donors to continue to secure flexible funding and resources for the programme in all ROs. Further, OHCHR should consider increasing the scope of the ERTs to cover under-prioritized regions such as South Asia, and the Caribbean.
2. OHCHR should consolidate the ERT programme, acknowledging that ERTs represent a core function of its work at the regional level, through continued fundraising as well as complementing its XB unearmarked resources if necessary.
3. OHCHR should, in the context of strengthening its ROs through a regionalization process, consider including ERTs functions and posts in its UN Regular Budget submission.
4. OHCHR should continue to encourage UN inter-entity cooperation on Early Warning, Early Action through the work of the ERTs and further strengthen its cooperation on data collection, management and analysis with UNDP, DCO, OCHA, DPPA and other relevant actors.
5. OHCHR should work with its FP and HQ units, as well as the wider UN system, in particular the human rights capacity embedded within UNOCC to ensure that the work and role of the ERTs becomes increasingly known, so that ERT field staff are better recognized in its humanitarian engagement and capacity crisis response

and their recommendations help to inform decisions about emergency deployments.

6. OHCHR should expand its information management capacity to build upon the success shown in the use of structured data, visualization, technical solutions and lessons learned in support of the ERT efforts to engage with partners in integrated analysis and improve situational awareness.
7. OHCHR should develop a more standardized formulation, for deployments, prioritization and reporting ERTs which ensures a greater global consistency, in line with the result-based management approach required by the institution's OMP and donors. This shall include quantified indicators for each ERT and visualization of results. This standardization should be understood as the first phase in the development of a programme theory of change for the programme.
8. OHCHR should produce a single consolidated report focused on the programme's objectives, Outcomes and Impact, presented in an analytical, results-oriented and more visually attractive manner to either supplement or replace individual narrative reports to donors on the activities and outputs of individual ERTs.
9. OHCHR should ensure that all needs assessments and M&E reports identify contextual specific barriers and strengths of women and vulnerable groups according to LNOB principles. Reporting documents should include gender-specific sections that can highlight and pinpoint actions and results in this area. The programme should also integrate LNOB principles into its measurement of results and indicators.

## **7. Recommendations to Programme Donors**

1. Donors should continue to support the expansion of the ERT programme within their own financial and organizational constraints and restrictions, taking into account their mandatory reporting procedures.
2. Donors should proactively coordinate with the ERT programme to engage constructively with the programme's efforts to promote reform in the broader UN system.
3. Donors should promote and highlight good practices emerging from the work of the ERTs to other programmes that they fund and more broadly amongst member states and in the wider UN system to highlight the continuing need for human rights mainstreaming.

4. Donors should consider accepting one single consolidated report focused on the objectives, Outcomes and Impact of the ERTs, including complementarity of action by OHCHR’s HQ and field – to either supplement or replace individual narrative reports to donors on the activities and Outputs of individual ERTs.

<b>Management response</b>		
<b>Evaluation of OHCHR’s Emergency Response Teams Programme 2017 - 2022</b>		
<b>Recommendation 1:</b> OHCHR should proactively coordinate with and between donors to continue to secure flexible funding and resources for the programme in all ROs. Further, OHCHR should consider increasing the scope of the ERTs to cover under-prioritized regions such as South Asia, and the Caribbean.		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b> Accepted		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>
1. OHCHR is coordinating with groups of donors and Member States supporting the programme to ensure sustainability of the programme.	ERS, Regional Offices, Dexrel	Ongoing
2. Coverage of regional offices, including the possibility of increasing scope, human and financial capacities for each ERT, to be discussed within FOTCD in the context of strengthening ROs, with the new OMP and the field engagement strategy.	FOTCD, in consultation with TESP RDD and CMTD	Q4/2023
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> OHCHR should consolidate the ERT programme, acknowledging that ERTs represent a core function of its work at the regional level, through continued fundraising as well as complementing its XB unearmarked resources if necessary.		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b> Accepted		
<b>Management comment:</b> Commitment by FOTCD, in cooperation with Dexrel, to continue fundraising for the ERTs programme with the aim to cost recover posts and activities. In the period between 2017 and 2023, ERS/Dexrel were able to fully fund the programme through a mix of earmarked/lightly earmarked contributions.		
<b>Key Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>

1. The Emergency Response Teams and its back office support are already included as core functions of HQ and regional offices. New posts have been published as fixed term appointments.	FOTCD	completed
<b>Recommendation 3:</b> OHCHR should, in the context of strengthening its ROs through a regionalization process, consider including ERTs functions and posts in its UN Regular Budget submission.		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b> Accepted		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>Key Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>
1. In the framework of discussions to expand OHCHR's regular budget, the Office will explore the possibility to include the ERTs programme in its submission.	FOTCD, PSMS	Q1/2024
<b>Recommendation 4:</b> OHCHR should continue to encourage UN inter-entity cooperation on Early Warning, Early Action through the work of the ERTs and further strengthen its cooperation on data collection, management and analysis with UNDP, DCO, OCHA, DPPA and other relevant actors.		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b> Accepted		
<b>Management comment:</b> : OHCHR will continue its ongoing work, carried out by ERTs, ERS, METS, PSPS, and other relevant entities, to further strengthen OHCHR's engagement with UN partners at HQ as well as in the field. This work includes, and it is not limited to, participation in global information management working group or UN Geospatial Network, training opportunities (i.e. ACAPS, UNSSC), as well as regional inter-agency networks and fora. ERTs will continue to work with UN regional partners, academic, civil society and humanitarian actors on early warning and prevention initiatives to support UN regional and country level presences.		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>
1. ERS to organize an ERTs' mission to NY to meet with UN partners and Member States and discuss further cooperation and exchanges on human rights analysis and information, as well as the role of OHCHR in the prevention architecture at global level and locally.	ERS in consultation with ERTs, PSPS, METS	Q3/2023
2. ERTs will strengthen further and systematise their contribution to HQ-led processes (such as Regular Monthly Reviews frameworks, Inter-Agency Standing Committee Early Warning Early Action) to feed in targeted human rights analysis. At field level, ERTs will continue engagement with CCAs and multi-	ERTs in consultation with ERS, PSPS, METS, SDS	Ongoing



**Recommendation 6:** OHCHR should expand its information management capacity to build upon the success shown in the use of structured data, visualization, technical solutions and lessons learned in support of the ERT efforts to engage with partners in integrated analysis and improve situational awareness.

**Management position on recommendation: Accepted**

**Management comment:** Resourcing of the IM strategy implementation plan, including to strengthen NY-based capacity, will be done in line with the overall resource mobilisation approach of OHCHR, i.e. priority will be given to position and activities under approved AWP (Minimum Requirements), for cost recovery purposes. Hence the implementation of Key Actions 1 and 2 will need to be considered in the context of the next OMP.

Further strengthening of the IM capacity in OHCHR should be seen in relation with the development of the new OMP and digital transformation strategy.

OHCHR will ensure strengthened coordination to leverage different expertise between ERTs and relevant Sections working on information management and other data/statistics related areas, including within FOTCD, with TESPRDD and CTMD, to ensure methodological consistency, effective data governance, quality and protection standards, as well as with Dexrel for improved mobilization and use of limited resources.

Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Further resourcing the ongoing information management strategy implementation plan to increase IM/data capacity in the field, strengthen the support services, and deliver the solutions that empower the teams in the field, will be done in line with the overall OHCHR's resource mobilization approach.	Dexrel, in consultation with relevant entities	Ongoing
2. OHCHR should strengthen and resource IM capacity in New York, to be able to fully leverage the analysis and outputs of the ERTs for influence and visibility with the rest of the UN system and senior decision-makers at headquarters in particular	Dexrel in coordination with PSPS and other relevant entities	Ongoing
3. ERTs will, in cooperation with relevant HQ Sections, work on innovative solutions to streamline workflows and advance data integration, and leverage tools and increase automation in support of their work, as foreseen by the OEAP on Digital Technology, the Digital Transformation strategy and related results framework.	ERTs in consultation with ERS, METS	Ongoing
4. Where relevant, data collection/dissemination by ERTs will be aligned with guidance produced by	ERTs in consultation with METS, ERS	Ongoing



OHCHR's Chief Statistician/Human Rights Indicators and Data Unit.		
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> OHCHR should develop a more standardized formulation, for deployments, prioritization and reporting on ERTs, which ensures a greater global consistency, in line with the result-based management approach required by the institution's OMP and donors. This shall include quantified indicators for each ERT and visualization of results. This standardization should be understood as the first phase in the development of a programme theory of change for the programme.</p>		
<p><b>Management position on recommendation: Accepted</b></p>		
<p><b>Management comment:</b> Please see also Recommendation I, Action I, in the context of strengthening Ros, FOTCD should discuss the possibility of increasing scope, human and financial capacities for each ERT.</p>		
Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Deployments of additional ERTs in regional offices that are not yet equipped with this capacity, are based on the understanding that OHCHR intends to equip all regional offices with this capacity. Criteria for deployments may be influenced by OHCHR's field engagement strategy (priority countries/regions).	FOTCD, ERS	Ongoing
2. A standardized programming and reporting document, with common results indicators for all ERTs, and applicable to different formats used by donors, will be developed in conjunction with the continuation of the project and in accordance with the OMP. The new proposal will include an updated theory of change for the programme.	ERS in consultation with Dexrel, PPMES	Q1/2024
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> OHCHR should produce a single consolidated report focused on the programme's objectives, Outcomes and Impact, presented in an analytical, results-oriented and more visually attractive manner to either supplement or replace individual narrative reports to donors on the activities and outputs of individual ERTs.</p>		
<p><b>Management position on recommendation: Accepted</b></p>		
<p><b>Management comment:</b></p>		
Key Action	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. OHCHR will consider reviewing the way in which it reports with an increased focus on outcomes and impact.	ERS in consultation with Dexrel, PPMES	Q4/2024
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b> OHCHR should ensure that all needs assessments and M&amp;E reports identify contextual specific barriers and strengths of women and vulnerable</p>		

groups according to LNOB principles. Reporting documents should include gender-specific sections that can highlight and pinpoint actions and results in this area. The programme should also integrate LNOB principles into its measurement of results and indicators.

**Management position on recommendation: Accepted**

**Management comment:**

<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>
1. Relevant ERTs/ERS staff to undertake e-learning modules on LNOB, gender integration (including the mandatory training online for OHCHR staff) and disability, and to consult seek Gender Unit guidance on planning. New programme to include gender and LNOB sections.	ERS, ERTs	Q4/2024
2. Integrate a gender perspective throughout the monitoring cycle, including needs assessments and reporting. Reporting documents to be amended to include gender-specific sections and results.	ERS in consultation with, Dexrel, PPMES	Q4/2024