

Check against delivery

**Statement by Jeff Crisp
Head, Policy Development and Evaluation Service
UNHCR Executive Committee, October 2011**

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

For those of you who are new to the Executive Committee, let me begin by providing some introductory information on the Policy Development and Evaluation Service or PDES. The Service is a relatively small unit that is located in the Executive Office and which works in close association with the High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner and the two Assistant High Commissioners.

The purpose of the Service can be summarized very simply: to provide UNHCR and its partners with credible evidence, credible analysis and credible ideas that can be used for the purposes of policymaking, planning and programming. More specifically, the Service has a demand-driven programme that is structured on a thematic basis and which integrates the four functions of policy development, evaluation, research and publications. All of our outputs are placed in the public domain, and it may be of interest for you to know that we have recently established a new portal on the UNHCR website which provides direct access to a set of key organizational policy statements. This statement has also been posted on the website.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With respect to policy development and evaluation, I am pleased to inform you that we have completed 13 projects in the past year. Amongst the most important of these have been a global review of the state of refugee education; evaluations of UNHCR's programmes for urban refugees in Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malaysia and Tajikistan, as well as reviews of UNHCR's response to recent emergencies in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and the Horn of Africa. In addition we are currently completing a series of evaluations on UNHCR's role in protracted refugee situations, focusing on Bangladesh, eastern Sudan, Serbia and Croatia and Tanzania.

An active follow-up process has been established in relation to each of these themes. Although it has not yet been published, the global education review is already being used as the basis for a new UNHCR education strategy. With regard to the urban refugee policy, PDES has established an interdepartmental Urban Working Group, which is overseeing the implementation of the new policy, including the preparation of operational guidelines and the establishment of a training module on UNHCR's urban refugee policy. Our work on recent emergencies is being used as the basis for a reconsideration of UNHCR's partnership with other agencies in refugee crises, where, as you know, the Cluster Approach is not applicable.

Looking to the future, in the next few weeks we will be issuing a number of new reports. These include a review of UNHCR's recent efforts to link humanitarian assistance with development aid; an examination of the way that UNHCR operates in insecure environments, a historical analysis of UNHCR's role in the voluntary repatriation of refugees; and, as mentioned by the High Commissioner in his opening statement to the Executive Committee, a study of the cost and impact

of refugees living in developing countries. In addition, we are finalizing a study of the protection issues that have arisen in recent natural disasters and initiating a review of the safe shelter arrangements can be used to protect survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

As well as finalizing these projects, we are embarking on a number of new initiatives: an evaluation of UNHCR's response to the Libya crisis, and a review of alternatives to refugee camps, both requested by the High Commissioner; a review of the mental health services provided by UNHCR, requested by the Deputy High Commissioner; an examination of the strategic use of resettlement, a project proposed by the Department of International Protection; and a review of UNHCR's engagement with refugee youth and a study of the movement of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, two projects which are being sponsored by an Executive Committee member.

Finally, PDES continues to act as a focal point for inter-agency evaluations and external reviews of UNHCR. In this context, I would like to mention an inter-agency real-time review of the international response to the Somalia crisis, in which PDES is playing an active part, and a review of UNHCR undertaken by a network of 16 states, known as the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network, for which the Service has acted as focal point.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would now like to say a few words about the research component of the PDES work programme. Between you and me, we are rather careful about using the word 'research' in UNHCR. Because in an operational agency which is struggling to save lives in a situation of resource scarcity, research can sometimes appear to be an unaffordable luxury.

While I understand that perspective, I also disagree with it. For in terms of providing UNHCR with credible evidence, credible analysis and credible ideas, rigorous research has an important role to play. Research can help us to think beyond the confines of our day-to-day work, enabling us to understand our operational environment better and to formulate innovative approaches to our work. Research has the ability to attract the brightest and best young people to UNHCR, as we have seen from the tremendous performance of the interns that have worked with us in recent years. Research also contributes to the development of an inquisitive, self-critical and forward-looking organizational culture, to which PDES is fully committed.

It is for these reasons that we have been striving to strengthen our research function, but to do so in a way that entails very little expenditure. In brief, the PDES research strategy consists of three interlinked components: first, the publication of a research paper series, 30 editions of which have been published in the last 12 months; second, an internship, sabbatical and small grants programme, all of them intended to bring new talent to the work of the Service; and third, the establishment of research partnerships with academic institutions that specialize in humanitarian issues. Those partnerships are admittedly still strongest in the industrialized states. But we are now look towards the developing world, and are in the process of strengthening our relationship with research partners in cities such as Cairo, Johannesburg, Kampala and Tehran.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the last part of my presentation, which focuses on some of the key objectives of the Service, and on which it would be useful to hear your views.

The first objective is to maintain and hopefully strengthen the Service's capacity without incurring additional expenditure or creating new posts. This is a particular preoccupation as we have recently

lost both a JPO and a government secondee, and because three of the four professional staff members in PDES are due to rotate to new posts in the next nine months. I would like to pay tribute to the contribution that all of those colleagues have made to the work of the Service, but I would also like to solicit the assistance of the Executive Committee in this respect. We are, for example, very keen to replace our JPO and secondee should that prove to be possible. We would also be happy to discuss the possibility of undertaking joint projects with member states and of incorporating your experts into our evaluation teams.

A second objective for the coming year is to determine whether it is possible to adopt a more decentralized approach to the evaluation function, so that entities other than PDES, such as the Regional Bureaux and our Country Offices, assume greater responsibility for initiating and managing independent reviews of their activities. This raises a number of questions. For example, should all UNHCR programmes of a certain size be required to commission independent reviews of those programmes on a periodic basis? Should a certain percentage of all programme budgets be ring-fenced for such purposes? Do UNHCR's Regional Bureaux and Country Offices have the expertise required to commission useful evaluations? And to what extent does PDES have the capacity to support the decentralization process?

Third, I would like to highlight some issues with respect to evaluation methods and criteria. With respect to methods, we have made a determined effort in recent times to establish mixed evaluation teams, the objective being to combine the institutional experience of PDES staff members with the independence of external consultants. We have also tried to make sure that all of our evaluation teams are gender-balanced and have appropriate functional, regional and linguistic expertise. It would be of great value for us to compare notes with Executive Committee members with respect to the way that you manage such issues. Similarly, we would welcome a dialogue with you with regard to way that evaluations approach the issues of efficiency and 'value for money'.

Finally, and as mentioned already, we regard the purpose of PDES as being to provide UNHCR and its partners with credible evidence, credible analysis and credible ideas. But how can we ensure that the evidence, analysis and ideas we generate are effectively utilized? I believe that we have made some progress in this respect. With regard to issues such as urban refugees, refugee education, UNHCR's role in refugee emergencies as well as age, gender and diversity mainstreaming, for example, we have seen how the findings and recommendations of PDES projects can indeed be incorporated into the processes of policymaking, planning and programming. We are also establishing a matrix of findings and recommendations for each evaluation which will enable us to track their utilization more effectively. We fully recognize the need to be more systematic in this respect, and invite Executive Committee members to support us in attaining such objectives.

Thank you very much.

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