

UPDATE ON COORDINATION ISSUES

Introduction

1. Responding to wishes expressed by member States for a more analytical approach to coordination issues, this note uses a thematic framework rather than an agency by agency approach. It demonstrates how improved coordination with selected intergovernmental partners has arisen from renewed partnership commitments, describing the problems which are being solved and the value being created as a result of increased coordination. The themes covered include durable solutions and social services as a dimension of protection. It also provides updates on UNHCR's response to the Millennium Development Goals, as well as latest developments on the Memorandum of Understanding with WFP. It concludes with issues deliberated within the CEB and IASC mechanisms. The note also contains references, where relevant, to UNHCR's Global Objectives for 2003.

2. Country-specific aspects of coordination will mainly be covered in the course of the strategic presentations and debates on regional operations at the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee. Updates on coordination with ICRC and IOM will be covered at the Standing Committee's 27th meeting in June 2003, in the context of the report on implementation of the Agenda for Protection. Finally, UNHCR's interaction with coordination and supervisory bodies such as ECOSOC, ECHA, and ECPS will be covered at the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee, in September 2003.

Durable Solutions

3. Since the last update examined at the 25th meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2002, UNHCR has made considerable progress in developing its partnerships for durable solutions in post-conflict situations, through the 4Rs programme concept. This advocates a process of seamless linkages between repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. A recent meeting of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) gave UNHCR the opportunity to deliver a comprehensive briefing on the 4Rs process, which was strongly endorsed by the member agencies.

4. As was emphasised to ECHA, the 4Rs serve as an advocacy tool and as a catalyst to focus the attention of governments and United Nations Country Teams on the specific reintegration needs of returning refugees and IDPs, at various stages of the post-conflict process. They also aim to ensure an integrated approach to planning and implementation, utilizing, as much as possible, existing frameworks such as Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process¹.

5. The following brief updates on the 4Rs in pilot countries demonstrate the level of coordination already taking place among the agencies participating in this important scheme. In each country, a specific approach has been developed to address the problems related to the transition from relief to development of the particular refugee or IDP population.

- In **Afghanistan**, a Letter of Understanding (LOU) signed between UNHCR and UNDP on 23 January 2003, was based on the 4Rs concept. It elaborates the conditions for cooperation between the two agencies and targets communities or areas with a high number of returnees with programmes intended

¹ Global objectives 4.3, 10.3 and 10.8

also for the benefit the local populations. A tripartite agreement between UNHCR, UNDP and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development was also signed on 27 January 2003, to coordinate activities in the area of reintegration. Another LOU, signed with UNICEF on 18 November 2002, formalized collaboration in several areas including child protection, education, and the health and water/sanitation sectors. In addition, a UNICEF staff member has been seconded to UNHCR's reintegration unit.

- In **Sierra Leone**, a 4Rs working group was established by UNDP, the World Bank and UNHCR in November 2002, and close cooperation is maintained with the entire United Nations Country Team on transition issues. Several potential areas of cooperation have since been identified, including information management, community empowerment projects and education rehabilitation in main areas of return. UNDP will employ a specific 4Rs focal point for all Inter-agency projects in returnee areas.
- In **Eritrea**, UNHCR's reintegration activities have been brought fully within the scope of the 4Rs concept, through a recovery programme jointly designed with the government and the United Nations Country Team. This programme aims at ensuring the sustainable socio-economic reintegration/rehabilitation for returnees through area-based approaches that also benefit IDPs as well as the host communities in affected regions. It has been prepared through the joint Government/United Nations Thematic Group on Recovery which functions within the UNDAF structure.
- In **Sri Lanka**, the transition strategy that governs the United Nations agencies, World Bank and Asian Development Bank incorporates the 4Rs approach and aims at an increased allocation of resources to 4Rs activities in partnership with the Government and donors. The Government and UNHCR are leading a "profiling" exercise to enhance data management of IDP/returnee population needs, including mapping of target population/areas and identification of return absorption capacities².

6. Close partnership with the International Labour Office is also making a significant contribution to the sustainable reintegration of refugees and IDPs. The two organizations collaborated in completing a training manual entitled "Introduction to Micro-Finance in Conflict-Affected Communities" in 2002. ILO has also supported UNHCR's review of its policy and guidelines on micro-finance, to ensure that micro-finance programmes follow sound practices and achieve a better impact on the socio-economic development of refugee and national clients. Cooperation with ILO has resulted in a number of other achievements including: a micro-finance database; a review of UNHCR's micro-finance portfolio; field assessment missions; updating and improving the micro-finance chapter in UNHCR's Self-Reliance Manual and UNHCR's micro-finance policy; and a training workshop using these newly-developed tools³.

7. A project for the rapid deployment of ILO livelihood experts (ILO-UNHCR partnership through technical expertise) is being developed in early 2003. This project will deploy experts on employment and labour-based strategies, micro-finance, skills/vocational training, and small/micro enterprises to refugee and returnee operations, in order to benefit refugees while contributing to the economic development of the local populations of hosting areas. This initiative will also serve to promote the 4Rs approach in target countries.

8. Focal points in ILO and UNHCR are working to further strengthen the partnership through a revision of the existing Memorandum of Understanding concluded in 1983. The revised MOU envisages greater partnership in several areas; these include enhancing the productive capacity of refugees; self-reliance programmes for refugees; local integration activities for refugees and reintegration of returnees; cooperation on migration-related issues; collaboration in protracted refugee situations and activities for urban refugees. Projects may include feasibility studies in those areas as well as assistance projects, staff exchanges, etc.

9. The close partnership with ILO is proving an invaluable means of addressing the durable solution needs of refugees and returnee populations, while drawing benefit from the technical expertise that ILO brings to these joint efforts. Like the 4Rs, it seeks to be a field-driven and practical approach to

² Global objectives 10.3 and 10.4

³ Global objectives 5.1, 7.2 and 10.5

cooperation on behalf of refugees, returnees, IDPs, and to include affected local populations in both the countries of origin and the countries of asylum⁴.

Social Services: extending the social dimension of Protection

10. UNHCR's partnerships with other United Nations agencies are of crucial importance in strengthening refugee protection in the social sphere. The "rights-based" approach applied by these agencies to their humanitarian and development activities, is of direct relevance to UNHCR's own concerns and can serve as a precious source of expertise and additional resources for refugees.

11. This is especially so in the implementation of UNHCR's priorities for refugee women and children, which has been the focus, for example, of much of the recent dialogue with UNICEF. Since mid-2002, a high-level, strategic dialogue has been taking place between the two organizations, aimed at revising the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1996. The dialogue covers collaboration in emergency and post-emergency situations as well as in protracted refugee situations, support to returnee reintegration and IDP programmes.

12. Whereas the review includes all areas in which UNHCR has long counted on UNICEF's support and expertise (primary education and health, unaccompanied/separated children, mine risk education, psycho-social support, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and sanitation), the two organizations are placing a strong emphasis on cross-cutting protection concerns. These include sexual exploitation, abuse and violence (focussing initially on the implementation of responsibilities outlined in the Plan of Action of the IASC Task Force), birth registration and staff and refugee security. The revised MOU may also include provisions for collaboration in fund raising activities for specified programmes and joint public information activities⁵.

13. UNHCR has also taken an active part in the IASC Task Force on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises, learning from the other agencies as well as chairing one of the sub-groups established within the Task Force and taking part last October in the Task Force's mission to West Africa. The inter-agency field testing of the UNHCR Guidelines on Prevention and Response to Sexual Gender-Based Violence will take place throughout 2003, and the Guidelines will be finalized thereafter⁶.

14. In the sphere of reproductive health, UNHCR, under the auspices of the Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, has joined with UNFPA and key NGO partners to support a global evaluation which will serve as a guide to programming in this sector for the next decade⁷.

15. In the broader field of health care, UNHCR is working with WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, NGOs and academic institutions on a joint health evaluation framework. This is the result of a three-year interagency initiative aiming to standardize routine health programme reviews for humanitarian crises and stimulate new ways of looking at health programme performance in complex emergencies. The findings of these evaluations should influence policy and decision-makers, and most importantly, operational partners, giving them a broader perspective on overall health sector performance and its impact on the health and nutritional status of affected populations. The evaluations should also provide clear suggestions on how to make programming more coherent and effective. Funding to implement this joint health evaluation framework is being sought jointly by UNHCR and WHO⁸.

16. Cooperation with ILO has recently been extended to the issue of refugee registration, where UNHCR aims to benefit from ILO's expertise to ensure that field registration yields information that is standardized and better supportive of measures to implement employment and training programmes. It is also envisaged to collaborate on the design of socio-economic surveys and labour market assessments that can provide useful information to support beneficiary economic empowerment, and promote the link between relief and development. UNHCR will share its updated Registration Guide with ILO for

⁴ Global objective 10.4

⁵ Global objectives 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, and 10.4

⁶ Global objectives 2.2 and 2.5

⁷ Global objective 3.4.

⁸ idem

comments, once completed, in addition to providing information on its on-site registration practices and scenarios. A meeting of the agencies' joint working group on registration is planned for the near future⁹.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

17. The Millennium Development Goals serve primarily as a coordination tool for the entire United Nations system, providing a common set of objectives upon which a growing part of the United Nations agenda is being formulated. UNHCR is committed to the MDGs and will increasingly use them as the overall framework and reference for its transition initiatives such as the 4Rs, as well as for its work with partner agencies towards the enhancement of protection in the social sphere.

18. Since effective partnerships within the United Nations system is a prerequisite for progress towards the MDGs, an internal communication has recently been issued by UNHCR which aims at sensitizing field offices to their importance. It calls attention to their use as a guide for the United Nations as a whole and as a framework for UNHCR's efforts to maintain internationally accepted standards of care, and strengthen coordination with other agencies to implement durable solutions and mobilize the necessary resources¹⁰.

Memorandum of Understanding with the World Food Programme (WFP)

19. A revised MOU was signed in July 2002 with the World Food Programme (WFP), aimed at enhancing the overall food security for refugees and persons of concern. Some important developments have marked the implementation of the revised MOU. Four countries (Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Sudan) have so far been identified to pilot the hand-over from UNHCR to WFP of responsibility for the final distribution of food to beneficiaries. The selection of a fifth country will be decided shortly and options have already been identified. UNHCR and WFP have successfully conducted a second workshop on the management of joint operations, held in Nairobi in February 2003. Participants from WFP, UNHCR and implementing partners of UNHCR participated in the workshop, representing 10 countries in the East, Horn, Southern and Great Lakes regions of Africa. A high-level meeting between senior officials of UNHCR and WFP is planned for early March 2003. High-level meetings recommended by the MOU are held regularly to discuss policy as well as operational issues of common concern. Joint needs assessments in accordance with the revised MOU planned in certain countries, such as Serbia and Montenegro, West Africa and elsewhere. UNHCR and WFP have also started working on developing of joint needs assessment guidelines which should be finalized by the end of 2003¹¹.

Chief Executives Board (CEB) and High-Level Committees

20. The Chief Executives Board held its second regular session of 2002 on 8-9 November. The main point on the agenda was the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, with a focus on the prevention of armed conflicts. The High Commissioner presented a concept paper which underlined the need for refugees, returnees, and IDPs to be included in development, transition, and recovery plans, in order for peace strategies to be sustained. The Chief Executives noted how refugee situations, especially when protracted, could contribute to further conflict, terrorism, child soldier recruitment and other human rights violations. Programmes helping returnees to become agents of development should therefore be pursued as integral components of system-wide approaches toward conflict prevention and resolution. The paper also highlighted recent initiatives undertaken by UNHCR with the aim of enhancing protection and durable solutions for refugees, as well as support for returnees and IDPs through an integrated approach including host governments, United Nations Country Teams, the donor community and bilateral aid agencies.

21. The CEB meeting included a retreat to discuss progress achieved on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development

⁹ Global objectives 1.5 and 3.1

¹⁰ Global objectives 10.3 and 10.8

¹¹ Global objectives 2.2, 2.6, and 10.4

(NEPAD). At this forum, UNHCR stressed once more the need for the inclusion of refugee and returnee needs into the wider development agenda.

22. The CEB meeting was preceded by the fourth session of the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) which took place in Vienna on 23-24 September 2002, and by the fourth session of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) held in Geneva on 7-8 October 2002. At the HLCP, in the context of the discussion on addressing the root causes of armed conflict, UNHCR highlighted the importance of targeting priority areas for preventive action in order to avert conflicts and their recurrence, especially the destabilizing factors related to displaced populations, both during the displacement phase and in post-conflict situations. At the HLCM, the issue of staff security and safety was of particular concern to UNHCR. An update was provided on progress in implementing the Minimum Operating Security Standards in the field. UNHCR also participated in the discussion on aviation safety and security standards.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

23. The IASC Working Group held its 50th and 51st meetings respectively in September and November 2002. UNHCR co-sponsored a discussion on Liberia and raised the issue of IDPs, who are assisted by UNHCR despite constraints in scope and resources. UNHCR also contributed to the revision of the Terms of Reference of the Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as to the review of the guidelines for the use of Military and Civil Defense Assets in complex emergencies. The discussion at the November session focused on Iraq. UNHCR has been actively engaged in the inter-agency contingency planning effort.

24. The IASC Principals session took place on 9 December 2002, with the Assistant High Commissioner in attendance. In the discussion on contingency planning for the Middle East, he called for joint action with governments to ensure that borders would be kept open in the event of a war. He also informed the Principals that UNHCR's Regional Coordinator would need to be based as close as possible to where refugee situations should they occur. The meeting also featured an open discussion on the crucial issue of the interfaces between humanitarian and civil defense and military actors in complex emergency response.