

UNHCR'S INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY:  
STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION THEREOF

A. Introduction

1. The Strategic Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Plan describes essential strategies and three-year (2005 - 2007) goals and objectives to strengthen the contribution of the Division of Information Services and Telecommunications (DIST) to UNHCR's operations and achievement of outcomes. The DIST strategy is aligned with UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives 2006-2007, and the planning process is now coordinated with the Annual Review Process.
2. This plan is designed to realize immediate advantages from the creation of the post of Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the conflation of the existing Information Technology and Telecommunications Service (ITTS) and the Management Systems Renewal Project (MSRP) organizations into one UNHCR-wide provider of ICT services, thus creating a single point of accountability for all service delivery and eliminating duplication of effort.
3. For the period 2005-2007, the strategy provides the basis for deriving benefits from major investments in the MSRP and "proGres" registration systems. The plan is also designed to eliminate barriers that have caused the Office to be slow to realize the management and operating benefits of fully integrated information systems and computing and communications technologies. It sets the stage for proactive and responsible participation by the DIST management team in the organization's planning at the strategic, operational and emergency response levels, and calls for strong executive governance to ensure that ICT investments are continuously aligned with UNHCR's strategic directions and priorities.
4. The most important principle underlying this strategy is that ICT decisions will be made in future through continuous and active collaboration between the division and other organizational units. The long-term aim is to build UNHCR's collective understanding of, and capacity to realize, the strategic and operational benefits to be obtained from an "organization-wide" approach to investing in ICT to meet humanitarian needs.

## B. Context: Strategic planning 2002-2004

5. In March 2002 an ICT Strategic Plan was submitted to Senior Management covering the period 2002-2004. This plan made assumptions about the external and internal environments in which UNHCR operates; UNHCR's likely response to these constraints; and the catalysts for strategic change to UNHCR's use of technology. It is noteworthy that, three years later, the assumptions concerning the role of UNHCR and the constraints in the use of ICT present similar challenges.

6. The 2002-2004 Strategic Plan identified three key goals for ICT:

- implementation of PeopleSoft Finance and Supply Chain (accomplished);
- transition strategies for legacy systems (accomplished);
- development of a standardized refugee registration system (Profile / "proGres") (accomplished).

Other key planning areas that were carried over into the 2005-2007 Plan included:

- the need for an effective decision-making process (governance) for ICT investments, grounded in cost-benefit analysis; and
- the requirement for DIST to play a more active role in organizational strategic planning.

## C. Development of the 2005-2007 Strategic Plan

7. A strategic planning environment was defined and describes the "steady state" of today's ICT organization in UNHCR. This baseline sets a context for the Office's operations and for DIST's interaction with these operations; and it identifies challenges and constraints incumbent on DIST to provide ICT services to the organization.

8. The most significant factors shaping the ICT planning environment and its impact on organization-wide ICT needs include:

- the changing role of UNHCR and increased operationality in the Field;
- the frequency of UNHCR emergency response;
- the need to fully include DIST in organizational strategic planning.

9. Through a series of workshops, the DIST Management Team (representing the CIO, ITTS and MSRP) identified challenges to UNHCR, to DIST, and to DIST's ability to achieve the new target "steady state" ICT organization and deliver against service expectations. These challenges were condensed into five priority planning areas:

- Business Solutions: reinforcing the ability of DIST to provide business solutions to UNHCR operational problems;
- Infrastructure and Services: designing and supporting a technology infrastructure that responds to operational requirements;
- ICT Strategic and Operational Planning: working towards becoming a full partner in the UNHCR operational planning function;
- Organization and Human Resource Management (HRM): creating a seamless HRM environment for the management of specialist ICT resources worldwide; and
- Governance and Finance: establishing an executive-level body to exercise oversight and set priorities.

These priority planning areas are more fully described in Annex I to this document.

10. Within these priority planning areas, the DIST Management Team established a set of 17 Strategic Goals which focused on DIST's delivery of key ICT services to the Office, and the internal capacity building required to deliver these services. For each DIST strategic goal, a set of initiatives was defined and prioritized, and DIST owners were identified. These 17 strategic goals are more fully described in Annex II to this document.

Major goals over the planning horizon from 2005 to 2007 include:

- Extending the reach and use of MSRP, working with Senior Management to more fully realize the benefits available from strategic investment in ICT;
- Establishing a global ICT decision-making process;
- Fully integrating DIST into the organization's planning process;
- Creating a global support structure to ensure responsive assistance to ICT users worldwide;
- Enhancing UNHCR's knowledge management systems and infrastructure to best leverage domain expertise worldwide;
- Investments in ICT infrastructure (telecommunications, networks) to support delivery of key systems;
- Developing human resource policies that recognize the unique requirements of ICT specialists.

11. A three-year planning framework was then defined, and likely start / completion dates for activities were identified. This three-year plan, along with a transitional workplan for 2005 activities, comprises the body of the DIST ICT Strategic Plan. Electronic copies of the complete ICT Strategic Plan can be obtained by email request to the Director, DIST (email: [serrato@unhcr.org](mailto:serrato@unhcr.org)).

#### D. Costing and funding the Plan

12. The divisional budget and staffing levels for 2005 were established prior to the creation of this Plan. The 2005 budget, negatively affected by a series of reductions in quarterly obligation amounts, will limit the scope of new strategic initiatives through this financial year.

13. Goals and Initiatives for 2006 were key inputs to DIST's submission to the 2006 Operations Review Board (ORB). These activities defined the incremental resource requirements (budgets, staffing levels) required to implement new initiatives above and beyond the ongoing "line of business" activities of DIST as reflected in the Division's transitional workplan for 2005.

14. During the planning process for the 2006 ORB, DIST referred to ICT industry benchmarks to determine the costs of new strategic initiatives due to start in 2006. The resultant budget submitted to the ORB which reflected these strategic initiatives was set at \$29.1 million. The 2006 budget was ultimately approved at 90 per cent of the 2005 budget, i.e. \$23.3 million. Sixty-five per cent of the approved 2006 budget (\$13.8 million) represents strategic activities associated with the completion of the MSRP Finance and Supply Chain roll-out and the development and deployment of MSRP Human Resources and Payroll. Five per cent (\$1.2 million) represents new strategic initiatives not directly related to MSRP. The remaining 30 per cent of the budget (\$7 million) represents commitments to service delivery already under way and fixed administrative costs (such as software licenses).

15. The strict limits on administrative budgets and staff growth for 2006 imposed by the ORB will have an effect on DIST's ability to implement parts of the Strategic Plan on schedule. Some key strategic goals may be delayed indefinitely due to insufficient resourcing. It will be the task of an executive-level ICT oversight body to prioritize DIST activities within the envelopes of available budget and DIST personnel.

#### E. Implementation of the Strategic Plan

16. Key strategic activities in the first and second quarters of 2005 included:
- completed the reorganization of the Division: centralizing accountabilities and responsibilities, avoiding duplication of effort, and better aligning resources to strategic goals;
  - completed deployment of MSRP Finance and Supply Chain to 38 Field locations in 32 countries of the Europe Bureau;
  - completed development of functional requirements and specifications for MSRP Human Resources and Payroll;
  - completed the deployment of the "proGres" refugee registration system to 143 field locations in 32 countries in all regions;
  - continued the enhancement of PAMA VSAT satellite network for offices in the Field;
  - continued deployment of UNHCR's intranet "*UNHCR-Net*" to offices outside of Headquarters.

17. Planning for the remainder of 2005 and into 2006 addresses activities in the following areas:

- completion of the MSRP Finance and Supply Chain roll-out;
- development and programming of the MSRP Human Resources and Payroll systems;
- redesign of "*UNHCR-Net*" and development of a knowledge management framework to leverage staff domain expertise;
- development of a next-generation Field Local Area Network.

18. Apart from the purely "technology" aspects of the ICT Strategic Plan, one section of the Plan highlights the unique requirements of human resource management in DIST. A human resource environment needs to be developed throughout DIST (Headquarters and Field) that reflects ICT industry practice; that attracts, develops, and retains qualified ICT specialist staff; and recognizes their important contributions to UNHCR's mandate. Furthermore, these human resource policies must address the specialist skills requirements, continuing professional training and development, and career management needs of DIST staff.

19. In the fourth quarter of 2005, the DIST Management Team will review progress against the Plan. Assuming a more integrated presence of DIST within the organization's planning framework throughout 2005, DIST will develop an updated three-year plan covering the period 2006-2008. DIST Strategic Goals and Initiatives will then form an input to the 2007 ORB.

20. Electronic copies of the complete ICT Strategic Plan can be obtained by email request to the Director, DIST (email: [serrato@unhcr.org](mailto:serrato@unhcr.org)).

DIST priority planning areas 2005-2007

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Strategic area</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
1	<b>Business Solutions</b> Reinforce the ability of DIST to provide business solutions to UNHCR's operational problems.	Provision of ICT applications development services needs to be centralized within DIST, and integrated into a single point of accountability for this service provision.
2	<b>Infrastructure and Services</b> Design, deploy and support a technology infrastructure that responds to UNHCR operational requirements.	UNHCR's ICT service level expectations - especially in field operations - argue for an enhanced investment in ICT infrastructure and services.
3	<b>ICT Strategic and Operational Planning</b> Become a full partner in the UNHCR operational planning function to ensure that ICT priorities and resources are aligned to organization strategy.	DIST is perceived throughout the organization as a support division, but is expected to play an operational role.
4	<b>Organization and Human Resources (HR) Management</b> Create a seamless HR environment for the management of specialist ICT resources worldwide.	The UNHCR environment poses unique challenges to the development of ICT staff capabilities. Human resources policies are in conflict with the requirements of the division to manage the specialized skills required to deliver ICT services.
5	<b>Governance and Finance</b> Establish an executive-level body to exercise oversight, ensure accountability, and set priorities.	With active senior executive oversight, maximum advantage can be taken from ICT expenditures and investments. This requires strengthening financial analysis of major projects.

DIST Strategic Goals 2005-2007

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Owning section</b>
1 Ensure that Headquarters and all field locations process all key UNHCR back-office activities on a common integrated application platform, based on PeopleSoft Application suite.	Third quarter (Q3) 2006	Business Solutions
2 Standardize refugee registration and emergency response applications for use in all field locations.	2005-2006	Business Solutions
3 Enhance UNHCR's Knowledge Management capacity at Headquarters and in the Field.	Q3 2005	Business Solutions
4 Set up a global support structure.	Q4 2005 - Q2 2006	Business Solutions Operations / Infrastructure
5 Develop an ICT contingency plan for strategic applications	2006	Operations / Infrastructure Business Solutions
6 Upgrade UNHCR's satellite network to support MSRP and provide new value-added services.	Q1 2005-2007	Operations / Infrastructure
7 Implement the next generation LAN and desktop platform for Headquarters and the Field.	Q1 2005 (completion)	Operations / Infrastructure
8 Provide UNHCR with an enhanced mobile productivity environment.	2005	Operations / Infrastructure
9 Establish a more effective field radio environment	Q2-Q4 2005	Operations / Infrastructure
10 Establish a reliable and robust disaster recovery environment for servers and applications	Q4 2006	Operations / Infrastructure
11 Work with Senior Management to realize the benefits available from strategic investments in ICT.	Q1-Q4 2005	CIO
12 Create a results-driven, integrated plan for DIST, based upon full participation in the organization's planning exercises at the strategic, operational and emergency response levels.	Q1 2005	CIO/DIST Management

13	Establish a policy framework where DIST has the ability to allocate and control essential global ICT human resources in a more responsive and flexible manner.	Q1-Q4 2005	Operations / Infrastructure
14	Establish a DIST environment that attracts, develops and retains qualified staff.	Q1-Q4 2005	Chief Information Officer (CIO)
15	Ease burden of HR Policies on DIST.	Q1-Q4 2005	CIO
16	Develop and implement an ICT decision-making model that defines the authorization and decision-making levels for ICT initiatives across the organization.	Q1-Q2 2005	CIO
17	Improve DIST management productivity and enable DIST line managers to focus on service delivery.	Q1-Q4 2005	CIO Business Solutions Operations / Infrastructure