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REPORTS RELATING TO EVALUATION AND INSPECTION

Evaluation and Policy Development

Report by the High Commissioner

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides an update on evaluation and policy development activities in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) since the last report to the Executive Committee plenary meeting of October 2005 (A/AC.96/1014), and invites Executive Committee Members and Standing Committee Observers to make specific proposals for future evaluation and policy development projects.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

2. Since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, a Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) has been established in UNHCR, replacing the former Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU). Located in the Executive Office, reporting directly to the High Commissioner and headed by a staff member at the D-1 level, PDES will assume responsibility for the formulation, development and implementation of the organization's evaluation activities. At the time of writing (July 2006), suitably qualified staff members were being identified to fill posts in the new Service.

3. PDES will ensure that the information, analysis, recommendations and lessons learned that emanate from UNHCR's evaluation programme are effectively utilized for the purposes of policy making, strategic planning and programme design. The new Service will also advise the High Commissioner and his senior management team on global policy issues, ensuring that UNHCR policies are coherent, consistent, clearly articulated and effectively disseminated. In addition, PDES will act as a focal point for UNHCR's relations with external evaluation and policy development entities, as well as the academic and research communities.

4. With the establishment of PDES, a review of UNHCR's existing evaluation policy has been initiated. The revised version of the policy will take account of the Norms and Standards for Evaluation that have been adopted by the inter-agency United Nations Evaluation Group. The policy will also introduce enhanced mechanisms for the implementation of evaluation recommendations, which will be compiled in a newly established database. In the context of this new evaluation policy, steps will also be taken to ensure that there is a clear and effective division of labour between UNHCR's evaluation, inspection and audit functions.

III. COMPLETED PROJECTS

5. As a result of the reorganization of UNHCR's evaluation function, the recent level of evaluation activity has been somewhat lower than that attained in previous years. Nevertheless, the past year has witnessed the completion of several evaluation projects, the reports of which are freely available on the [UNHCR website](#).

A. Refugee livelihoods

6. Following its earlier work on the problem of protracted refugee situations, EPAU established a project that was intended to provide UNHCR and its partners with a better understanding of the way in which refugees seek to establish their own livelihoods. The project produced a variety of case studies of refugee livelihoods in both rural and urban contexts, and also established a web-based network, the [Refugee Livelihoods Network](#), consisting of some 500 practitioners and researchers. This project was completed with the publication of a report, "Refugee livelihoods: a review of the evidence" and a special issue of *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, titled "Refugee livelihoods: continuity and transformations". This work has been disseminated to UNHCR staff and partners by means of the Knowledge Network of UNHCR's "Durable solutions for displacement" initiative.

B. Light vehicle utilization and fleet management

7. Following a recommendation made in an earlier review of UNHCR's community services function, EPAU undertook an evaluation of the way in which the organization utilizes and manages its extensive fleet of light vehicles. The findings and recommendations of this evaluation have been fed into a broader internal review of UNHCR's Supply Management Service (SMS) which is seeking to enhance its logistics, supply and stockpile management functions. As a result of this review, SMS is establishing a global vehicle stockpile and management unit in Dubai, which will be responsible for administering the rolling stock of vehicles, as well as for establishing a fleet management system that could potentially save the

organization significant financial resources. SMS is also in the process of establishing clear and measurable benchmarks and indicators for the implementation and progress of this initiative

C. Canadian policy deployment in Guinea

8. This evaluation, undertaken in association with the Government of Canada, reviewed an 18-month deployment of two teams from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Guinea. The evaluation formed part of a broader and longer-term review of UNHCR's role in maintaining security in and the humanitarian nature of refugee-populated areas. The evaluation concluded that the deployment had enjoyed only limited success, and drew particular attention to the need for host government and field office commitment to such deployments and for the effective integration of external security personnel into UNHCR structures. The lessons identified by this review, as well as those identified in an earlier review of the United Republic of Tanzania "security package", will be used as a basis for the planning and implementation of future initiatives related to refugee security.

D. The role of "the Desk"

9. EPAU undertook a review of the role of "the Desk" in UNHCR which involved an extensive internal consultation process as well as a comparative review of the role of "the Desk" in other United Nations organizations. The review identifies the key roles and responsibilities of "the Desk" and the means whereby those roles and responsibilities can be effectively discharged. The findings and recommendations of this project are being fed into UNHCR's Structural and Management Change process.

E. Protection Information Section

10. At the request of the Director of the Department of International Protection, EPAU undertook an evaluation of the Protection Information Section. This evaluation was instrumental in the establishment of a new Status Determination and Information Section, which has taken up a number of the evaluation's recommendations, including the establishment of a Refworld DVD and website.

IV. ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS

A. Refugees in urban areas

11. Drawing upon a series of field-based evaluations and an extensive consultative process involving UNHCR staff and partners, PDES is finalizing an EPAU initiative to formulate a new UNHCR policy and implementation guide on refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas. It is expected that the new policy will be endorsed and disseminated in the final quarter of 2006. The new policy acknowledges that a growing proportion of the world's refugees will be found in urban areas; clarifies UNHCR's role in providing such refugees with protection, assistance and solutions; and, incorporates a number of other UNHCR initiatives into the organization's work with refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas, most notably the community-based approach and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming.

B. Liberia

12. At the request of the Regional Bureau for Africa, in July 2006 a PDES consultant travelled to Liberia in order to undertake an evaluation of UNHCR's three-year-old programme for internally displaced persons (IDPs) which has entailed the return of some 310,000 IDPs to their place of origin. The purpose of this review is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the UNHCR programme for Liberian IDPs and on that basis to identify lessons learned that can be applied to other IDP situations. The review will focus on six principal and interrelated themes: UNHCR's response to the specific operational environment in Liberia; the integrated mission approach to humanitarian action; the cluster approach to IDP situations; inter-agency coordination; protection and assistance activities; and, return and reintegration activities.

C. Tsunami response

13. At the request of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, and in response to an audit recommendation, PDES is undertaking an evaluation of UNHCR's response to the December 2004 tsunami emergency in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In addition to examining the effectiveness of UNHCR's emergency response procedures, it is anticipated that this review will generate important findings and recommendations relating to UNHCR's involvement in environmental disasters and IDP situations.

D. International migration

14. In anticipation of the General Assembly's High-Level Dialogue on International Migration, to be held in New York in September 2006, PDES, working in close consultation with the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) and the Division of International Protection Services, has reviewed the role of UNHCR in relation to international migration. This review has led to the preparation of several documents: a position paper titled "UNHCR, refugee protection and international migration"; a set of observations and recommendations for the consideration of the High-Level Dialogue; and, a "10-Point Plan of Action" for addressing mixed migratory movements. A key feature of these documents is a recognition that UNHCR is not and does not intend to become a migration agency, nor does it engage in activities that are commonly referred to as "migration management". UNHCR's mandate is to provide refugees and others persons of concern with protection and solutions, and to exercise this mandate effectively. UNHCR has a legitimate but limited role to play in the broader issue of international migration.

V. RESEARCH PAPERS

15. PDES has assumed responsibility for the publication of the research paper series "New Issues in Refugee Research", 130 editions of which have been published in the past six years. PDES hopes to increase the pace of production of these papers. Recent and forthcoming papers include studies of forced displacement in Africa; refugee policy in Eurasia; Somali refugees in the United States; the Refugee Convention as a "rights blueprint" for persons in need of international protection; and, refugee women's livelihoods in Uganda.

VI. FUTURE PROJECTS

16. Executive Committee Members and Standing Committee Observers are invited to make specific proposals for future evaluation and policy development projects, and are also welcome to consult with PDES on the development of the Service's activities. PDES is especially eager to undertake joint evaluations with Executive Committee Members and partner organizations.