



# General Assembly

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## Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

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**Reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation**

## Policy Development and Evaluation

### Report of the High Commissioner

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared in conformity with the decision of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to receive a report on evaluation at its annual plenary session (A/AC.96/1003, para. 25.1 (f) (vi)). The period covered by this report is from mid-2010 to mid-2011.

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## I. Introduction

1. During the reporting period, the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) pursued an integrated programme of policy development, evaluation, research and publications, focusing on those policy issues, programmes, projects, practices and partnerships that are of greatest concern to the High Commissioner.
2. PDES is located in the High Commissioner's Executive Office and is represented on UNHCR's Senior Management Committee. The Service establishes its work programme on the basis of regular consultations with members of the Executive Office, as well as other senior managers, and with external stakeholders, including Executive Committee members, United Nations and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the academic community.
3. The independence of PDES is assured by means of the UNHCR Evaluation Policy, as well as the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) Norms, Standards and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United Nations system, to which UNHCR subscribes. The Service enjoys methodological independence and strives to attain the highest possible level of transparency by placing all of its reports in the public domain.
4. PDES does not use a fixed or standard methodology and makes regular use of independent evaluations, real-time evaluations, participatory evaluations, beneficiary-based evaluations, joint and inter-agency evaluations as well as lessons-learned and effective practice reviews. PDES convenes workshops on issues related to its work programme and provides facilitation services to other entities within UNHCR. The Service also represents UNHCR at international conferences.
5. PDES strives to ensure that all evaluation teams are gender-balanced and has established its own Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Framework. Evaluation teams involve staff members and/or consultants with appropriate expertise, language skills and local knowledge. PDES strives to publish its reports in other languages, in addition to English, in order to contribute to the dissemination of its work. The Service also seeks to maximize impact by using its projects as a basis for magazine and journal articles, press releases, web stories, conference presentations and other outputs.

## II. Capacity

6. PDES currently has six core staff members (five professional and one general service). One of the professional posts is a new one, established and filled by a suitably qualified staff member since the time of the last Executive Committee meeting. All professional staff members in PDES have received external and on-the-job training in evaluation objectives, methods and utilization, as well as in policy analysis and development.
7. The Service augments its regular capacity through the engagement of consultants, interns and academic researchers working on a *pro bono* or expenses-only basis. PDES also welcomes the participation of personnel from partner organizations in its evaluation activities.
8. In the course of the past year, members of the PDES team have been deployed to the emergency operation in Tunisia and to the joint UNHCR-International Organization for Migration (IOM) Evacuation Cell.

9. The following sections of this paper identify the key themes of the PDES work programme during the reporting period, and provide a summary of the specific activities undertaken in relation to each of them.

### **III. Urban areas**

10. In mid-2009, PDES undertook a major review of UNHCR's response to the Iraqi refugee situation in urban areas of the Middle East. The findings and recommendations of that review assisted the Service to draft UNHCR's new Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, released in September 2009, and which was one of the key background documents for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, held three months later.

11. At the 2009 Dialogue, the High Commissioner requested PDES to undertake a series of evaluations of the implementation of the new policy. Since that time, reviews have been completed in Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malaysia and Tajikistan. The Service is establishing a UNHCR Working Group on Urban Areas in order to oversee the implementation of the new policy, and to ensure the effective utilization of the findings and recommendations of its evaluations.

12. In June 2011, PDES organized an inter-agency workshop on effective practices in urban refugee programmes, co-hosted by UN-HABITAT and the International Rescue Committee. The workshop, which involved some 30 people from every part of the world, was sponsored by an Executive Committee member.

13. PDES is to publish a scoping study on urban displacement, in association with the Cities Alliance, and is contributing to a special issue of the journal *Disasters* on the same theme. The Service has also published a report on the advocacy strategies that are available to UNHCR in its efforts to ensure that urban refugees enjoy the right to work and establish livelihoods.

### **IV. Protracted refugee situations**

14. In fulfillment of a commitment made by the High Commissioner at his 2008 Dialogue on Protection Challenges, PDES has been undertaking evaluations of the implementation of his Special Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations. At the time of writing, reviews had been completed in Bangladesh, Croatia and Serbia, eastern Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

15. In addition to these reviews, PDES is participating in and contributing to an evaluation of the use of food aid in protracted refugee situations, led by the World Food Programme. The Service has also commissioned an independent study focusing on the cost and impact of refugees on host countries in developing regions of the world.

### **V. Durable solutions**

16. The work being undertaken by PDES on protracted refugee situations constitutes part of a broader effort to examine UNHCR's role in the promotion of durable solutions. In that context, the Service is (a) completing a review of the organization's efforts to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and development aid; (b) preparing a history of voluntary repatriation as a solution to refugee situations; (c) planning a review of the 'strategic use of resettlement' concept, to be undertaken in 2012.

17. PDES is currently carrying out an evaluation of UNHCR's reintegration activities in Sierra Leone. In addition, the Service has published studies on repatriation to Liberia and South Sudan, the resettlement of Bhutanese and Sudanese refugees in the United States of America, and refugee integration in Ghana.

## **VI. Emergencies and natural disasters**

18. During the reporting period, PDES published a review of UNHCR's response to the emergency in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and completed a compilation of lessons learned from UNHCR's involvement in emergency operations during the past decade. Both reviews are being utilized in an ongoing initiative to strengthen UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity. An evaluation of UNHCR's response to the Libya crisis is currently under consideration.

19. PDES completed a real-time evaluation of UNHCR's role in the Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia emergency and has been asked to prepare a global analysis of one of the key issues to arise from that operation, namely the inter-agency division of labour and the role of UNHCR in refugee emergencies. The Service has also been asked to review UNHCR's policy towards refugees living outside of camps in host communities, another issue that has arisen in the context of the Ivorian influx in Liberia.

20. Following its earlier study of the role of UNHCR in natural disasters, PDES, in association with the Division of International Protection, is undertaking a study that identifies and examines the key protection issues to arise in such disasters.

## **VII. Age, gender and diversity**

21. 2010 saw the completion of a major, global and independent evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy, complementing a series of earlier evaluations on closely related issues: UNHCR's work with refugee women and children and the community services function. Since that time, the evaluation has been used as the basis for the formulation of UNHCR's new AGDM strategy.

22. PDES has published two reports on refugees and asylum-seekers with disabilities, one of which provides a review of the healthcare services available to those people. A report on the role of community development in UNHCR's refugee protection activities was also released.

23. The Service has established a partnership with the University of Berkeley Human Rights Center, which is undertaking a review of 'safe shelter' arrangements for refugee women and other refugees with specific protection needs. A report on the protection of children against witchcraft accusations was also published.

## **VIII. Refugee education**

24. At the time of writing, PDES was completing a global review of the state of refugee education which involved field research in Malaysia, Mauritania and Uganda. Plans are being made to launch the report of the evaluation at the 2011 Executive Committee meeting. A separate study of informal refugee education in Uganda has also been published.

## **IX. Mixed migration**

25. PDES has continued to examine the issue of mixed migration and its implications for refugee protection and solutions. The Service prepared the background paper for a conference on mixed migration in the region spreading from the Horn of Africa to South Africa, which was jointly convened by UNHCR and IOM. Additional studies were completed on African asylum-seekers in Israel, Somalis in the United Kingdom, and the use of domestic and international law for the protection of trafficking victims.

## **X. The changing context of humanitarian action**

26. PDES is undertaking a number of projects that examine the changing context of humanitarian action. These include a review of UNHCR's operating methods in insecure environments, focusing on the organization's activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Service is also undertaking research on UNHCR's historical relationship with non-state actors and co-hosted a workshop on stabilization programmes and the protection of civilians, with the Overseas Development Institute.

27. During the reporting period, PDES has contributed to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Humanitarian Space, as well as the IASC's work on the accountability of the humanitarian community. One PDES paper published in the course of the year examined UNHCR's organizational culture and decision-making processes in the context of the humanitarian reform initiative.

## **XI. Refugee activities and aspirations**

28. The work of PDES is based on the notion that UNHCR programmes and projects must be based on an effective understanding of the activities and aspirations of refugees and other people on the move. In this context, the Service is examining the ways in which refugees make use of mobility and irregularity in their efforts to access improved opportunities for themselves. PDES has also published a report on the role and functions of artistic activities in refugee camps, as well as a study of the way that refugees make use of new technologies.

## **XII. Results-based management**

29. Since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, PDES has completed a review of the implementation of results-based management (RBM) in UNHCR, involving missions to Georgia, Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen. The findings and recommendations of the review are being used as a means of fine-tuning the organization's approach to RBM. In addition, the Service has published a critical review of UNHCR's use of indicators in its field operations.

### **XIII. Publications**

30. In addition to its evaluation reports, PDES published more than 25 research papers in the course of the year. The Service is playing an advisory role in relation to the 2012 edition of *The State of the World's Refugees*, and is also represented on the editorial boards of several journals, including *Forced Migration Review*, *Global Networks*, the *Journal of Refugee Studies* and *Refugee Survey Quarterly*.

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