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Reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation

Report on 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-2012 to mid-2013.

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I. Introduction

1. During the past year, the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) focused its activities on the thematic and operational priorities that were defined by the Executive Office and the Executive Committee. The Service worked to strengthen and integrate the policy development and evaluation functions, to ensure the effective dissemination and utilization of evaluation findings and recommendations, and to promote the principles of transparency and accountability within the organization. The Service maintained a close working relationship with Executive Committee members that conduct or commission evaluations of UNHCR activities, so as to avoid any duplication of effort and ensure that the PDES work programme reflects the Committee's priorities.

II. Refugees in urban areas

2. PDES continued to devote attention to the issue of refugee protection and solutions in urban areas. Having completed earlier evaluations of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malaysia and Tajikistan, PDES convened and co-chaired a Steering Group to oversee the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy. The Urban Refugee Steering Group has sponsored two support missions in Ecuador and Cameroon to provide situational analysis and technical expertise for the requested sectors. The Steering Group also arranged two advocacy missions whereby the Assistant Secretary of State for the United States of America and the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations met senior government officials in Kampala and Addis Ababa to advance the agenda for urban refugees.

3. PDES undertook a survey of 24 country offices with large urban refugee populations to ascertain the extent to which the policy has been put into practice. In collaboration with the Division of Programme Support and Management, PDES has developed a website hosting a community of practice on working with urban refugees.

III. Emergency response and preparedness

4. During the reporting period, PDES undertook evaluations of UNHCR's emergency response in Ethiopia and South Sudan, and finalized an evaluation on the response to the Libya crisis. In May-June 2013, PDES led a real-time review of the Office's response to the Syria refugee emergency in Jordan, Lebanon and northern Iraq. The evaluation team included two representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, PDES completed a review of the protection risks that most commonly arise in the context of natural disasters, based on an examination of those disasters in which UNHCR was operationally engaged over the past decade.

IV. Protection and solutions

5. PDES commissioned an independent and global review of the strategic use of resettlement, which is anticipated for publication in the second half of 2013. With the support of an Executive Committee member State, the Service also initiated a review of the extent to which resettled refugees have been able to integrate in the labour markets of the countries which have admitted them. A preliminary report was presented to the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in July 2013. Looking more broadly at solutions, including solutions for persons who are deemed not to be in need of international

protection, PDES undertook a global review of UNHCR's engagement with assisted voluntary return programmes. Finally, PDES completed a review of the organization's efforts to link humanitarian relief and development over the past decade.

V. Protracted refugee situations

6. UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) undertook a joint evaluation of the impact of food aid in protracted refugee situations, focusing on Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia and Rwanda. A synthesis report was prepared, together with a joint management response, which was crafted at a high-level meeting between WFP and UNHCR. As a follow-up, PDES has initiated a study of situations where refugees have successfully achieved self-reliance, so as to identify the key variables that support this outcome.

7. In response to a request by the Executive Office, PDES undertook an assessment of the confidence-building measures between Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria and Sahrawi families in Western Sahara in June 2013.

VI. Refugee youth

8. During the reporting period, PDES published an independent and global review of UNHCR's engagement with displaced youth and convened a roundtable event for specialists in this field. Following up on its 2010 report on unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe, PDES commissioned a study to investigate the motivations and profile of unaccompanied Afghan children. The research is being undertaken in four provinces by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

VII. Mental health

9. In 2012-2013, PDES undertook reviews of UNHCR's provision of mental health and psycho-social support to staff members and to persons of concern.

VIII. Sexual and gender-based violence

10. During the reporting period, PDES supported a multi-country review of the safe shelter arrangements provided to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Four country reports and a synthesis report were launched at UNHCR's NGO Consultations in June 2013.

IX. Faith and protection

11. In collaboration with the Division of International Protection and as a follow-up to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on faith and protection, PDES conducted a survey of faith-based organizations and local faith communities involved in humanitarian action, including those in partnership with UNHCR, in order to identify good practices and lessons learned from the field. Two papers, published and presented during the 2013 NGO Consultations, focused on the implications of the faith identities, motivations, and structures of a range of these groups, as well as the political and social capital they bring to bear on protection activities.

X. Oversight and staffing

12. PDES played an active role in a continuing initiative to define the respective roles of the evaluation, inspection and audit functions. The Service also participated in meetings of the newly-established Internal Compliance and Accountability Committee, one objective of which is to ensure the effective utilization of oversight findings and recommendations. In this context, PDES introduced a management response mechanism for completed evaluations.

13. A postdoctoral researcher sponsored by an Executive Committee member State completed a one-year secondment to PDES, while the Service was provided with a new Junior Professional Officer post by another member State of the Committee.

XI. External relations

14. PDES has continued to represent UNHCR in relation to the United Nations Evaluation Group and Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. The Service has also acted as UNHCR's focal point for a number of external and inter-agency evaluation initiatives, including a review by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation in UNHCR. PDES continued to liaise with the Multilateral Organizations Assessment Network with respect to the findings and recommendations of its 2011-2012 review of UNHCR.

XII. Research and publications

15. During the reporting period, PDES published 17 papers in the series *New Issues in Refugee Research* and contributed articles to journals such as *Forced Migration Review* and *Disasters*. The papers for *New Issues in Refugee Research* covered a wide range of topics, including the protection concerns of young Afghans seeking asylum in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and returning to Afghanistan; urban refugees in Cameroon; the impact of human smuggling from Eritrea; return and reintegration in Rwanda; and the importance of refugee children's participation in addressing protection concerns in Uganda.
