

REINTEGRATION: A PROGRESS REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As requested at the informal consultations on reintegration in 1998, the High Commissioner has kept the Executive Committee informed of the Office's reintegration activities at regular intervals. The last such report was given to the seventeenth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2000 (EC/50/SC/CRP.11).

2. This conference room paper provides a summary of UNHCR's reintegration activities during 2000, and illustrates two overarching objectives which guided such activities over the past year: partnership development and building on lessons learned. The first objective is based on the acknowledgement that UNHCR cannot assure reintegration alone, but has to rely on the expertise of others, in order for reintegration to be sustainable and lead to long-term development. The second objective stems from the conviction that lessons learned from past and ongoing reintegration operations need to more systematically inform UNHCR's policies and procedures for the future.

II. INITIATIVES IN FAVOUR OF SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION

A. Brookings Process

3. The need to ensure a broad partnership of development and humanitarian actors in reintegration operations and to address some of the more obvious "gaps" in such operations led the previous High Commissioner and the President of the World Bank to launch a Roundtable hosted by the Brookings Institution in January 1999.¹ UNDP subsequently joined this initiative as a co-sponsor.

4. As described in conference room paper EC/50/SC/CRP.11, the second Roundtable in July 1999 acknowledged that any prospect of surmounting these gaps effectively would require determined efforts to forge strong "coalitions of the willing", especially at the operational level in the field. The Roundtable affirmed the value of testing the efficacy of such coalitions by establishing "partnership initiatives" on a case-by-case basis to cope with specific post-conflict situations. The starting point was to breathe life into existing arrangements by jointly developing innovative gap-filling programmes.

¹ EC/49/SC/CRP.6

1. Brookings in West Africa

5. Sierra Leone was identified as one such "partnership initiative" and, in 2000, an attempt was launched to support the fragile peace in the West Africa sub-region. This effort was facilitated by UNDP, UNHCR and the World Bank, in their joint capacity as the Brookings Secretariat. As a first step, a weeklong high-level mission took place, which re-assessed the results of previous missions and identified five gaps, which would need to be addressed within nine months: political will, reintegration, communications and governance, regional follow-up and funding.

6. As requested during the mission's sharing of first impressions in Geneva, a preliminary needs "menu" was drawn up by the field to facilitate the "division of labour" among donors. While including projects from Liberia and Guinea, the joint project menu focused primarily on projects in Sierra Leone which were to be implemented by FAO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO through respective line ministries (including the National Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Resettlement in Sierra Leone) and implementing NGOs.

7. Unfortunately, by early May the security situation in Sierra Leone deteriorated significantly. Project emphasis therefore shifted to Liberia and Guinea. A project with Radio Rural Guinée, aimed at informing refugees in Guinea, was about to start implementation when the tragic attack on the UNHCR Field Office in Macenta forced the organization to evacuate all staff in the country to Conakry.

8. The experience in West Africa, in particular the security problems during the implementation phase, clearly shows how difficult it is to work in the volatile environment of societies emerging from conflict. It thus underlines the importance of sound analysis when choosing whether and how to support societies in transition. This experience also highlighted the difficulty of agencies to think "out of the box" and act jointly when too many issues are put on the table. A more effective method would probably be to focus on one particular problem and then to look beyond the needs, i.e. place this problem within the broader political context. Finally, the West Africa experience proved the necessity of donor "buy-in," and in particular, donor involvement during the planning stages, when supporting societies in transition.

2. Post-conflict Engagement Group

9. Based on the lessons learned in 2000, and with the view to bringing renewed commitment to the Brookings Process, an informal meeting was convened by UNHCR in Geneva on 15-16 November 2000. This meeting featured the participation of humanitarian and development actors, both from the United Nations and donors. It examined the challenge of increasing the international community's practical impact by devising possible new ways of supporting the transition from violence and instability to development and stability in societies in transition. As a result, two teams, each co-led by a donor and a United Nations agency, are now looking to support the road to peace and development by bringing fresh programmes and resources to the Republic of the Congo and/or Rwanda in 2001. The teams also agreed that their approach must commence with a sound and objective analysis which would:

- Ascertain what is the nature of the gaps, if any;
- Devise ways to address them; and
- Where necessary, propose complementary programmes.

10. The aim is that, based on the teams' analysis, solid pilot projects can be started in the first part of 2001. UNHCR is helping to facilitate the work of the teams by serving as an informal Secretariat. Currently, the two teams are holding regular teleconferences in preparation for joint missions to the Republic of the Congo and to Rwanda at the end of February 2001.

3. Support of Principals

11. The goal of achieving greater coherence among the various initiatives related to post-conflict societies was reconfirmed in a videoconference on 14 December 2000, in which the Principals of the World Bank, the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, UNHCR, WFP, OCHA, as well as representatives of the European Commission and a number of donor and refugee hosting countries (including the ambassadors to the United Nations of the Republic of the Congo and of Rwanda). In the near future, this commitment to post-conflict peace-building efforts will be translated into the following concrete steps: field analysis of transition activities and of donor funding in selected countries including the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda; joint reporting by the in-country team underlined by a common strategic vision; and further videoconferences between the Principals to assess progress.

B. Developing Partnerships

12. Inspired by the Brookings spirit of mobilizing context-specific coalitions of the "willing and able", UNHCR embarked on a series of new partnerships, while reinforcing ongoing partnerships in 2000. Though each has its own specific elements, all of these partnerships aim to ensure sustainable reintegration for UNHCR's populations of concern. UNHCR's engagement in these partnership initiatives is based on a number of guiding principles:

- Improvement of understanding among humanitarian/development actors so as to facilitate close cooperation in the future;
- Optimization of resources by complementary action, based on comparative advantages;
- Action-oriented partnership with tangible results;
- Joint information gathering and sharing;
- Joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and
- Establishment of areas of common geopolitical interest.

1. UNHCR/GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) initiative

13. Launched in August 2000, the UNHCR/GTZ initiative aims to address crucial reintegration issues in post-conflict situations through joint programming and implementation of co-funded (e.g. by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ)) reintegration programmes. UNHCR's reintegration concerns would thus be linked to broader development activities through joint planning.

14. Under this initiative, joint missions have taken place at the field level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sri Lanka and Colombia, with a view to launching pilot projects. Joint programmes have been identified and initiated in these countries and in Sierra Leone. The respective field offices are following-up on this exercise. These field-based initiatives will be supplemented by regular and systematic information exchange, both at headquarters and at field levels.

2. Regional Development Banks

15. During the second half of 2000, UNHCR undertook a desk review of its experience in dealing with Regional Development Banks (RDBs). This review showed that UNHCR and RDBs are working on parallel tracks, particularly in post-conflict activities in the areas of rural development, health, education and income-generation. The review also showed that there is room for convergence. The overall objective of establishing operational cooperation with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) is therefore to facilitate the inclusion of populations of concern to UNHCR in RDB-funded projects in the aforementioned sectors.

16. Steps towards this objective have included meetings with AfDB's and ADB's focal points on inter-agency cooperation, and efforts to identify possible countries of common interest, in which operational cooperation could be pursued. A preliminary list includes Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Myanmar, Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

3. International Labour Organization

17. As a follow-up to the International Workshop on Microfinance in Post-Conflict Countries, co-sponsored by UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in September 1999, the two organizations embarked on a more strategic cooperation in 2000 (operationalizing the Memorandum of Understanding from 1983). In September, an ILO staff member from the Social Finance Unit was seconded to UNHCR's Reintegration and Local Settlement Section. Activities to date include a review of the UNHCR's microcredit schemes -- *inter alia*, those implemented under the Japanese Trust Fund -- to see where and how UNHCR could benefit from ILO's expertise. A microfinance training session took place for UNHCR staff at Headquarters. Training sessions in the field are foreseen for 2001. Plans are underway to make ILO expertise available to selected programmes in the field.

4. The World Bank

18. In addition to embarking on new partnerships to facilitate reintegration, UNHCR has strengthened its collaboration with the World Bank both at field level and through staff exchanges. In May 2000, UNHCR and the World Bank in Sri Lanka signed a partnership agreement to support the implementation of the North-East Irrigated Agriculture Project (NEIAP). This project aims to assist 100,000 people in the conflict-affected areas of the north-east of Sri Lanka by helping them to re-establish at least a subsistence level of production and basic community services. The project will fund agricultural and small-scale reconstruction activities as well as build the capacity for sustainable social and economic reintegration.

19. In the southern Caucasus region two joint projects for reintegration and local integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) were initiated in 2000. They include the Georgian Self Reliance Fund (GSRF) which is managed by the World Bank, with project selection and monitoring carried out jointly by OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR and the Swiss Government. The GSRF is seen as a possible way for UNHCR to gradually phase out its assistance to the IDP population and their gradual integration into government development plans.

20. A similar fund, albeit with different modalities, is the Social Fund for Development of the IDPs (SFID). This fund was set up in late 2000 for IDPs in Azerbaijan. A Board of Directors (composed of governmental departments, national NGOs, UNDP, UNHCR, USAID) monitors and provides secretarial support, while projects are selected at community level. Projects will be funded by a World Bank soft loan to the Government of Azerbaijan.

21. It is hoped that such efforts in Azerbaijan and Georgia, along with a third initiative for refugees and IDPs in Armenia launched in 1999, can serve as a model to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development strategies within an inter-agency/donor/government framework.

22. In addition to collaboration in the field, a staff exchange agreement between UNHCR and the World Bank began with a UNHCR staff member working for three months at the World Bank office in Jakarta. The World Bank has now proposed a World Bank staff member to work for a similar period in a UNHCR office in the field.

III. LESSONS LEARNED AND NEW INITIATIVES

A. Operational Framework

23. UNHCR's Operational Framework for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities was published and distributed in June 2000. A Working Group is to be established at Headquarters during 2001 which will analyse feedback from the field in order to start incorporating lessons learned from new initiatives such as the Post-Conflict Engagement Group.

B. Information Management System

24. Reintegration activities in 2000 yielded a number of lessons which have been fed into new initiatives. The West Africa experience underscored the need for a common planning base if an effective operational link between relief and development is to materialize. In this context, members of the United Nations Country Team in Freetown identified information management as the primary means to provide existing cooperation mechanisms with a solid planning foundation.

25. The secondment of an Information Management Specialist from the French Government has assisted UNHCR in contributing to designing a joint information system for the humanitarian, development and government agencies working in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone Information System (SLIS), which will be housed in the OCHA office, will include three country-based information systems: an assessments library, an assistance information system, and a database on refugees and IDPs. A budget has now been identified and the recruitment of a project manager and a database/geographic information system specialist are underway.

C. Joint Reintegration Programming Unit in Rwanda

26. An independent evaluation of the Joint Reintegration Programming Unit in Rwanda (JRPU) was undertaken in September 2000 by an independent consultant selected jointly by UNHCR and UNDP. Its main objective was to evaluate the JRPU as a mechanism for addressing reintegration needs in Rwanda and make recommendations for future inter-agency collaboration on reintegration. The report on this evaluation will be available shortly.

D. Imagine Co-existence Project

27. In her opening statement at the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee, the previous High Commissioner emphasized the need to promote co-existence in the short term during post-conflict reintegration, in order to prevent the recurrence of violence in divided communities, and to promote long-term reconciliation. Follow-through necessarily requires the know-how and expertise of other agencies. Imagine Coexistence, a joint initiative of UNHCR and the Program on Negotiation (PON) at Harvard Law School, was conceived with this in mind.

28. In July 2000, pilot projects were identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda, in close collaboration with the local communities. Focus will be on community-based income-generating activities across a range of sectors where people learn together, work together, think together and play together. Pilots in Kozarac/Prijedor and Drvar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Rusitare and Ngoma/Butare (Rwanda) are expected to start in early 2001.

IV. OTHER INITIATIVES

29. As a follow-up to its four inter-agency missions to Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of the Congo and Somalia, a final report was produced by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group. Subsequently, a set of operational, field-directed guidelines to Country Teams based on the Reference Group's work and findings over the past two years has been shared with the Reference Group members for their comment. These so-called "Golden Rules" are intended to constitute the IASC's "operational guidelines".

30. UNHCR also participated actively in the OECD/DAC Task Force's regional consultations aimed at updating its *Guidelines on Conflict, Peace, and Development Cooperation*. Having met in Africa in 1999, the Task Force held informal consultations in Cartagena in July 2000 and in Bangkok in October 2000. Core members of the Task Force met in November and in December 2000 to incorporate the results of the three regional consultations and finalize the supplement to the DAC Guidelines, as well as the Policy Statement, *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict: Guidelines for External Partners*. Both will be reviewed by the DAC before being forwarded to the DAC High Level Meeting, scheduled for 25-26 April 2001.

31. The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809), commonly referred to as the "Brahimi Report", calls for the need for an integrated approach to the development and implementation of conflict prevention, peace-keeping and peace-building activities, the latter "in effect, a hybrid of political and development activities targeted at the sources of conflict" (para. 44). As reintegration is an element of long-term peace-building, the Brahimi Report's recommendation that no new gaps develop between the humanitarian/development actors and military/political initiatives in relation to peace-building, is worth taking note of. UNHCR continues to monitor developments in relation to the implementation of this Report. It is also working to re-orient, where possible, its various post-conflict initiatives to ensure that they are supportive of the overall goal of peace-building.

V. CONCLUSION

32. Illustrated in these various examples, UNHCR's efforts in reintegration cover a wide range of efforts. The overall goal remains that of seeking, where possible, greater convergence between the various initiatives. The Executive Committee will continue to be kept informed of these efforts.