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Evaluation of UNHCR training activities for implementing partners and government counterparts

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

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Aim and scope of the evaluation

In 1997, the UN's Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) called for the training programme of both UNHCR staff and its implementing partners to be "evaluated for its cost-effectiveness and impact".[1] A comprehensive review of UNHCR's staff training programme was undertaken in 1999, partly addressing the ACABQ's concerns[2]. The current review builds upon the conclusions of the 1999 study and focuses on the training which UNHCR provides to its implementing partners and government counterparts. It was prepared by a UNHCR staff member, temporarily assigned to the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. The findings of this review will be complemented by a forthcoming independent evaluation of UNHCR's role in strengthening national non-governmental organizations.

[1] *Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the UNHCR Executive Committee*, para. 54, 25 September 1997, A/AC.96/884/Add.3.
[2] *A Review of UNHCR Staff Training*, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR, June 1999.

Abbreviations

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ARRA	Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs
CAR	Commissioner for Afghan Refugees
CDP	Career Development Plan
CMS	Career Management System
COMAR	Comisíon Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados
COR	Commissioner for Refugees
DHC	Deputy High Commissioner
EMTP	Emergency Management Training Programme
EPAU	Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
EPRS	Emergency Preparedness and Response Section
FMIS	Financial Management Information System
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
HQ	Headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IES	Inspection and Evaluation Service
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRC	National Refugee Commission
OMS	Operations Management Systems Section
PARINAC	Partnership in Action
POP	People-Oriented Planning
SDR	Swiss Disaster Relief
SDS	Staff Development Section
SMC	Senior Management Committee
TAB	Training Advisory Board
TRS	Training Recording System
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

1. In recent years, UNHCR has trained the personnel of its implementing partners and government counterparts in a growing number of areas. These training opportunities have played an important role in developing and forging stronger partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), while training programmes for government counterparts have often enabled UNHCR to exert a significant degree of influence on asylum practices and the treatment of refugees. The participation of NGOs and government officials in these programmes has contributed to increasing operational preparedness. Such training efforts have also helped to raise UNHCR's credibility and have contributed to enhancing the capacity of some societies to deal with refugee issues, thus preparing the way for UNHCR to play more of a supervisory than a substitutive role. And the high quality of some of the training programmes has certainly helped improve services to refugees.

2. The progressive decentralization of training activities, which started to take place after the establishment of UNHCR's Training Service in 1987, has stimulated the development of the large variety of training activities that are now available. Courses, workshops and seminars, as well as more innovative methods of training, are managed by independent training providers within work units responsible for specific job areas. The close relationship between individual training providers and their particular subject areas largely explains the high quality of the materials used in some of the programmes. The assignment of volunteer training co-ordinators in each UNHCR office and the creation of several field-based refugee law training coordinator posts – all responsible for assessing training needs in their areas and organizing an effective response – have helped sustain the attention given to UNHCR partner training.

3. However, and despite these achievements, the training of operational partners and government counterparts has remained largely fragmented and unfocused. Although in recent years UNHCR has invested considerable time and effort in developing a coherent staff training programme – linked to human resources management, the formulation of performance requirements and the assessment of training needs – the development of a similarly consistent training programme for operational partners and government counterparts has remained elusive. The initiatives taken to develop a coherent strategy and which might have enabled this training activity to become fully independent of the UNHCR staff development programme have not been sustained or followed up.

4. If UNHCR had shown a similar level of commitment to non-staff training, as, with some interruptions, it has to the training of its own staff, significant benefits would, undoubtedly, have been achieved by now. In particular, a greater degree of commitment to training would have led to more of an impact on the performance of partner organizations and on the quality of operations. Indeed, given the level of resources allocated to this area and the strategic importance associated with it, it is surprising that

the training of operational partners and government counterparts has remained so much in the shadows.

5. Non-staff training remains an aspect of UNHCR's work in which the organization continues to be uncertain and indecisive. UNHCR has repeatedly wavered at implementing several promising initiatives to develop a specific strategy for this area of training, which has consequently never gone beyond the stage of being much more than an extension of staff training. Thanks to the enthusiasm of several in-house training providers, however, there are some notable and successful activities, but this is not equivalent to establishment of a relevant and coherent non-staff training programme. The main problem areas lie in the lack of: a systematic assessment of training needs; effective coordination and delivery mechanisms; effective monitoring and evaluation procedures; and the failure of training programmes to be designed in accordance with organizational needs and priorities.

6. These failings were recognized as early as 1992-93 by the Task Force on Training, which made a number of recommendations and proposals for further developing training for UNHCR staff, operational partners and government counterparts. It made clear that the "lack of systematic analysis of the training needs of operational partners is particularly critical" and urged that an appropriate methodology be developed.[3] Had these key proposals been followed up, the priority learning needs that a training programme is required to meet would now have been much more focused.

7. When a few years later, in 1997, the Training Advisory Board (TAB), composed of representatives of all UNHCR training providers, reviewed the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations, it concentrated its attention almost entirely on staff training.[4] The training strategy propsoed by the board added few new elements to the discussion on the training of operational partners, essentially limiting itself to the comment that non-staff training is "relevant and important" and repeating the operational proposals made previously by the Task Force.[5]

8. Largely owing to decentralization within UNHCR, the Training Service, renamed the Staff Development Section (SDS), was no longer in a position to put the recommendations on operational partner training – made by either the Task Force or the TAB – into practice. Furthermore, because of the progressive decentralization of training budgets, the section could no longer claim to bear overall responsibility for training. This factor contributed to the fading out in the organization's training activities of centralized coordination and quality control, with the inevitable result of duplication and a failure to set and apply professional standards. With the introduction of the Career Management System (CMS) in 1996, almost all attention turned to staff development, which marked the virtual disappearance of operational partner training from UNHCR's developing comprehensive training programme.

9. Meanwhile, during the course of the Partnership in Action (PARINAC) process, a parallel discussion on the training of operational partners took place, which generated a

[3] Task Force on Training, Report to the High Commissioner, p 32, para. 78, February 1993.
[4] The TAB, a committee of representatives from several work units at HQ, was created in 1995, and is responsible for the management and budget administration of those training activities transferred from the SDS in 1995.
[5] A UNHCR Training Strategy, proposed by the Training Advisory Board, p. ii, para. iv , June 1997.

series of proposals leading, inter alia, to the policy document *Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness*, prepared by the NGO Liaison Unit in 1998. This strategy contained promising new ideas as well as some vital elements for a future training strategy, aimed specifically at national NGOs. In particular, by including the need to identify "core competencies for national NGO implementing partners", the strategy attempted to frame the assessment of training needs in the context of a performance management approach, as the strategy for UNHCR staff training had done earlier. It also introduced a potentially new role for international NGOs by handing them operational responsibility for the training and capacity building of national NGOs. However, funding for the implementation of this ambitious strategy has still not been secured.

10. The absence of a coherent partner training strategy and of appropriate tools for the management of a partner training programme has meant that the impact and effectiveness of training activities have been limited. Only when UNHCR develops a comprehensive partner training strategy that takes account of the large number of different types of operational partners and their varying training needs can there be more of an impact on the organization's performance.

11. The assessment of training needs is supposed to take place primarily at the operational level in an ongoing dialogue between UNHCR field staff and implementing partners. However, and for this to occur, programme and protection officers need to be more active and pro-active in coaching operational partners and identifying training needs as new goals are set. Despite the clear understanding that these activities are a central part of their responsibilities, many officers do not seem to rank them very highly among their daily priorities. UNHCR's own staff training programme should focus more attention on increasing the skills' requirement of, in particular, the job of programme officer. Activities such as process facilitation and coaching are integral parts of the programme officer's responsibilities and need to be developed and supported. This also applies to other posts that involve working with operational partners, such as protection and field officers.

12. Training has a pivotal role to play in combining the attainment of organizational goals with improved performance of UNHCR's partners. Increasingly, this role is being recognized in the strategies formulated at the organizational level as well as by some regional bureaux. For instance, in its medium-term plan for 2002-05, UNHCR commits itself to ensuring that its implementing partners "receive the appropriate training and support to comply with conditions associated with the implementation of projects on behalf of UNHCR". This approach is echoed by some regional bureaux, which have given the training of operational partners and government counterparts a place in their strategies. However, it remains to be seen whether UNHCR will be able to draw the full potential of these efforts without first developing the management tools required for a more systematic identification of training needs, the setting of training priorities, plus the design of effective training programmes and monitoring procedures.

13. All key policy documents on the training of operational partners and government counterparts generated by UNHCR during the past few years have agreed that the continued absence of such management tools constitutes the crucial weakness in UNHCR's training activities for partners. The documents concur to a remarkable degree on what needs to be done to address these concerns. And yet, no more elements of a training strategy exist today than almost a decade ago.

14. Two main factors can explain this state of affairs. First, the absence of a clear stakeholder who might have continued developing a partner training strategy has clearly contributed to this lack of follow-up. Ultimate responsibility for the training of partners has never been assigned to a particular section or unit of the organization in the way that the SDS is seen as responsible for staff development. A second reason for the vacillation has been the continued association of partner training with the training of UNHCR's own staff, of which it is taken to be an extension. The concepts applied to partner training have been essentially the same as those of UNHCR's staff training strategy, in which the role of the supervisor is key (the individual supervisor or the organization as employer). However, as the relationship between UNHCR and its partners is not a supervisory one, policy development in the area of partner training should have started from a different set of principles altogether. Furthermore, dealing with a government counterpart or an NGO partner has quite different implications for UNHCR. The framing of the training needs assessment process in terms similar to the UNHCR staff development programme has, therefore, been inappropriate and, ultimately, ineffectual.

15. Renewed and urgent efforts are required to ensure that the initial steps in developing a coherent and comprehensive strategy for the training of operational partners, which have been taken repeatedly over recent years, are now effectively followed up. Since this process is already long overdue and involves a large number of interested sections of the organization, centralized management would be advisable.

16. In developing such a training strategy, UNHCR should recognise that the concept of the training of its own staff is essentially different from the training of partners, principally because the relationships are not the same. A partner training strategy can only be effective if UNHCR moves beyond a supervisory role towards a true partner relationship with its implementing partners and government counterparts. Training needs to be seen as one part of a joint process to improve standards, enhance performance and capabilities, for which UNHCR and its partners share a common responsibility. Therefore, further developing the training of operational partners and government counterparts could be greatly enhanced by placing it in the more comprehensive context of a wider capacity-building approach.

17. In view of the variety of different operations and the diverse profiles and needs of partner organizations, an improved management structure for training should be built on the achievements of decentralization. However, it needs to be reinforced, streamlined and made more consistent. Consideration should be given to the creation of regional partner development officer posts. Within a newly designed policy for the training of operational partners and government counterparts, these members of staff should focus on developing individual development plans with, and for, partner organizations and government counterparts in their regions.

18. At the central level, responsibility for the supervision and planning of partner training should be clearly and formally assigned. The selected unit or section should be given the job of continuing to develop a specific partner training strategy, drawing on the many initiatives that have been taken in this direction during the past few years. It should focus on developing the management tools required for a more systematic identification of training needs, the setting of training priorities, the design of effective training programmes as well as effective monitoring. The SDS, which should continue to focus exclusively on staff development, could provide technical support and should perhaps be

given the authority to carry out quality control in programme design and training methods.

19. The systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of training on individual trainees and organizations can help make training more effective and improve course design. Most importantly, despite the evident improvement in UNHCR's monitoring capacity as a result of the recent creation of a special budget code for operational partner training, there is still room for improvement in the recording of training activities. Hopefully, the new Operations Mechanism System (OMS) will lead to greater visibility of training organized in and by the field, but this needs careful monitoring. And it is not enough simply to record participation in training events, as is now the case. Efforts should also be made to analyse and evaluate the impact of training on UNHCR's overall operational effectiveness.

20. Some training providers in UNHCR have started to take on board new trends and concepts in the training field and have been looking at different ways of cutting down on formal training methods. Many are aware that formal training practices should ideally only fill in the gaps that are not met by the natural learning process. Therefore, overused training practices, such as workshops and classroom-based training, are gradually being phased out, although more effort is still needed in this area. In particular, since learning is at its most effective in the day-to-day work context, it is recommended that programme officers receive training and guidelines to provide on-the-job training and coaching to their counterparts.

21. The dual role of training as an important factor in organizational learning as well as in individual staff performance should be recognized. Training events such as seminars can provide a forum where issues, operational policies and problems are thoroughly discussed. Feedback from such events can help the organization discover where it is going wrong and to identify best practice. This, in turn, can help generate new organizational initiatives and promote imaginative new solutions to operational problems. In certain cases, for example, training may not be the most appropriate response to a previously identified need. Another course of action may ultimately be deemed more suitable, such as rationalizing reporting requirements and adapting operational mechanisms and procedures.

Recommendations

22. On the basis of the preceding analysis, this report makes the following recommendations:

- More needs to be done to ensure that a coherent and comprehensive strategy for the training of operational partners and government counterparts is developed. This strategy, or rather strategies, should be developed with specific reference to the profile and needs, roles and responsibilities of each of the different categories of partners: national and international NGOs and government counterparts.

- If a specific training strategy for operational partners is to be developed, then this area of training can no longer continue to be an extension of UNHCR's staff training programme. This means that UNHCR's partners need to be given a more central role in the process of assessing learning needs. The strategies can be greatly

enhanced by placing them in the more comprehensive context of a wider capacity-building approach.

- UNHCR should identify one department, section or unit within the organization as the stakeholder for the area of operational partner training, which should then be given the responsibility for developing appropriate policies and strategies. As staff development is conceptually and, in terms of audience and procedures, significantly different from the training of operational partners, the SDS should not assume this responsibility. However, the SDS could support the process by giving advice on training management and methodology.

- Both UNHCR and representatives of operational partners need to undertake a joint systematic review to identify whether more effective solutions than training can be found to deal with problems of noncompliance and performance.

- UNHCR's staff development programme needs to focus more attention on increasing the professional skills of, in particular, the programme officer function. The same applies, but to a lesser extent, to protection and field officers. Activities such as process facilitation and partner coaching are integral elements of their job responsibilities and need to be developed and supported.

- The impact of training needs to be systematically monitored and evaluated. Assessments need to be carried out to ascertain what trainees retain from their training, as well as its impact on their skills. The impact of training on UNHCR's overall operational effectiveness and on the quality of its operations and programmes should also be analysed.

- UNHCR should adopt new approaches to learning. Existing alternatives to formal training, such as distance learning, computer-based training and coaching, need to be developed further. A partner learning programme should take advantage of the enormous opportunities for learning offered by joint operations planning, joint missions and structured debriefings, joint lessons-learned exercises and the development of best practice.

- Interagency cooperation in the training of partners can multiply the effectiveness of training. It should be given a central place in partner training strategies.

Introduction

Background

23. Not long after the inception of its staff training programme some 20 years ago, UNHCR began to extend training to the staff of its implementing partners and government officials involved in refugee operations. In line with the staff training programme's objectives, the intention behind this decision was to improve the effectiveness of operational partners, entrusted with the implementation of programmes, and government officials of refugee hosting nations in the execution of their duties as UNHCR partners. It was expected that these activities would, ultimately, enhance UNHCR's ability to deliver its mandated activities.

24. The training of partner staff and government officials has developed largely as part of UNHCR's overall staff training programme. Over the past few years, a large number and variety of training programmes have been developed, primarily in response to the perceived development needs of the organization's own staff. With some notable exceptions, non-staff training has generally meant giving implementing partners and government officials access to selected existing UNHCR staff training programmes (which are, therefore, frequently referred to in this review). By extension, many of the conclusions and recommendations of the *Review of UNHCR Staff Training*, undertaken in 1999, also apply to this study.[6]

Demarcation of the area under review

25. During the past two decades, those who have benefited from UNHCR organized training have included, in addition to UNHCR staff, the personnel of implementing partners, government officials, staff of other UN agencies, UNHCR project staff, students, lawyers and consultants. The training of UNHCR staff was the subject of an Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) review in 1999. This study, however, focuses on the training of NGO staff members acting as UNHCR implementing partners, and government officials of countries hosting refugees.[7]

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[6] *A Review of UNHCR Staff Training*, Evaluation report, UNHCR, June 1999.

[7] The term "non-governmental organization" is used here in the broadest possible sense and refers to any partner organization of UNHCR that is not a government department, an agency of the UN or a part of any other intergovernmental body. Therefore, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), as well as national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, have been included in this category.

26. In 1996, the TAB proposed the following definition of non-staff training:

> [Non-staff] training is a structured learning activity, designed to develop or improve the effectiveness of the staff of UNHCR's partners, in order to achieve shared objectives. It is most commonly provided through joint workshops and the sharing of written and audio-visual materials. An important related consideration is that the training of UNHCR's partners is likely to include promotional or advocacy objectives, particularly in the area of international protection.

27. This definition comprises two major elements. The central one is the enhancement of the partner's effectiveness in the pursuit of objectives shared by UNHCR. The second is the understanding that training is likely to include promotional or advocacy objectives, particularly in the area of international protection. This definition, however, is insufficiently clear for the purpose of this review, since it falls short of distinguishing training from a number of other related activities, such as capacity building, wider advocacy work and public information. Each of the two elements of this definition leave key questions unanswered.

28. For instance, if effectiveness is seen as the ability to achieve a goal in an appropriate, timely and cost-effective manner, does UNHCR provide training to enhance the performance management skills of its partners' personnel? It clearly does not, yet the definition suggests that it does. To what extent should training be used to support a partner's goals that are not directly linked to its role as an implementing partner, yet would have an indirectly positive impact on its performance under the terms of a subagreement? What distinguishes training from promotional and advocacy activities, while recognizing that often there is no clear line of demarcation between the two? In order to determine the scope of this review in a more precise manner, the two elements of this definition need to be examined more closely.

Distinguishing effectiveness from capacity building

29. In defining training as a tool for enhancing the effectiveness of UNHCR's partners "in order to achieve shared objectives", UNHCR acknowledges that objective-setting for training should be guided primarily by operational needs. In most cases, these needs emanate from the challenge of implementing a set of activities within a specific operation, as agreed between UNHCR and each partner. Usually, the overriding objective of these activities is meeting the international protection and humanitarian assistance needs of refugees and/or other beneficiary populations. In other cases, however, operational needs may include goals that go beyond the needs of a specific operation and may extend to longer-term aims, such as, for instance, supporting the development of a civil society as part of a prevention strategy. In the first scenario, UNHCR attempts to enhance the effectiveness of partners while focusing on their role as an implementing partner in a particular operation. In the second, UNHCR supports the development needs of a partner organization beyond the needs of the operation in which both are co-operating, an activity often referred to as "capacity building".

30. There appears to be a general lack of precision in the terminology used in this area, and there is a need to define more clearly terms such as "enhancing effectiveness",

"training" and "capacity building", as well as the relationships between them. The UNHCR *Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness* (1998) uses the words "effectiveness" and "capacity" virtually as synonyms and defines both as "the ability to achieve a goal in an appropriate, timely and cost-effective manner".[8] A number of other UNHCR policy documents understand capacity building differently.

31. In 1998-99, a UNHCR Working Group on Capacity Building was created, inter alia, to address this confusion in terminology and to bring a clearer focus to the field. The working group noticed that "a somewhat ad hoc approach to the area [of capacity building] is reflected in the confusing and often interchangeable use of the terms describing the activities, be it 'institution building', capacity building or promotional activities. The concepts appear to have seldom benefited from in-depth, internal discussion, which, in turn, has meant unclear ultimate objectives and an apparent lack of consistency."[9] With respect to training, the working group observed that "capacity building has sometimes been used in UNHCR as a synonym for training".[10]

32. At the same time, the working group recognized that, over the years, at UNHCR capacity building had gradually acquired a meaning of its own, as the term became:

> broadly used to describe the wide variety of measures that UNHCR takes or promotes that enable societies to deal with issues relating to populations of concern to UNHCR. In effect, the concept of UNHCR capacity building implies that the organization is assisting the state to do its job. The term [....] includes activities such as awareness-raising for the population at large, promotion of refugee law, institution building, the provision of office equipment and professional training.[11]

33. Drawing on this broad understanding of what capacity building generally deals with, but still in the midst of considerable confusion, the working group proposed a definition in which the term capacity building implies:

> ... the reinforcement of human, institutional or community performance, skills and knowledge on a sustainable basis. It is both an approach and a set of activities, intimately linked to nationally driven reform processes. As an approach, it focuses on existing initiatives, commitments and potential as distinct from relief, which addresses needs and problems. It aims at building a network of partners at various levels, is highly participatory by nature and requires shared commitments on the part of external and domestic actors. As a set of activities, it implies provision of technical support, including training, advisory services and specialised expertise in favour of national and local institutions or structures, aimed [....] at fulfilling UNHCR's primary objectives.[12]

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[8] ibid.
[9] *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*, p. 8, UNHCR, January 1999 (draft).
[10] ibid.
[11] *A Review of Capacity Building in Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 1, Inspection and Evaluation Service, UNHCR, August 1996.
[12] *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes.*

34. According to this definition, capacity building focuses on goals that clearly lie beyond the enhancement of the effectiveness of agencies in their role as implementing partners. In a capacity-building approach, training can be an instrument, among other methods and tools. Without a doubt most of the training that UNHCR currently offers its partners falls outside the scope of capacity building as defined above. Another aspect of capacity building relevant to this review is that it focuses on enhancing national governmental and non-governmental capacity, and UNHCR's training programmes also include international NGOs.

Distinguishing training from promotional or advocacy activities

35. In exploring the relationship between training on the one hand and promotional and advocacy activities on the other, a distinction needs to be made between training that *supports* promotion and advocacy programmes (the training of promoters and advocates) and training that *includes* aspects of promotion and advocacy. In the first case, the relevant training programme is no different from other training programmes except in its subject matter. But also in the second case, there is no reason to view protection training differently from training in other areas. If it is recognized that UNHCR's partners have a role to play in refugee protection, then their effectiveness as partners is enhanced the more they know and understand protection principles and concerns. Protection training of UNHCR partners is, in this sense, no different from programme or logistics training. Therefore, in the view of this evaluation, the second element in the TAB definition confuses rather than aids in the understanding of this issue. This element would be more appropriately when used in referring to situations in which categories of trainees, such as journalists or lawyers, participate in UNHCR-organized training events. However, since they are not implementing partners, these trainee categories have not been covered in this review.

Conclusion

36. Four partner training objectives can, therefore, be identified:

- Implementing arrangements: training to improve the efficiency of implementing arrangements and to enhance the effectiveness of implementing partners in fulfilling the obligations under the terms of signed agreements;

- UNHCR's mandate: training to ensure that partners understand the mandate and principles of UNHCR, as well as the international protection context of UNHCR's operations. This could include training to enable partner staff to assume protection functions, in which case it overlaps with the next objective;

- Partnership: training to develop the effectiveness of partners in assuming shared responsibility with UNHCR for the protection of refugees and for the planning and management of humanitarian assistance programmes; and,

- Capacity building: training focusing on longer-term goals and on areas beyond current joint programmes, including the organizational development of partner agencies and the management development of their staff.

37. This review deals with training in the first three areas. Training as an element of the capacity building of national NGOs will be examined in a forthcoming EPAU review. For the purpose of this review, "non-staff training" is defined as structured learning activities designed to develop or improve the effectiveness of UNHCR's partners in achieving the objectives of the operations under UNHCR's mandate, for which UNHCR has an agreed project budget and for which it has signed an agreement with its partner.

Operational partners and government counterparts

The importance of implementing partners

38. The degree of importance of UNHCR's partners to the organization's work is not only measured in terms of the size of the funds entrusted to them. The roles of government agencies and national NGOs in refugee programmes are, first and foremost, expressions of the commitment of governments and societies to addressing the plight of refugees. They play an invaluable role in their advocacy On behalf of refugees and in developing good relations between refugee communities and host country populations. The same applies, although in a different context, to international NGOs, as they represent grassroots support for refugee programmes across the world and take on the job of advocacy vis-à-vis public opinion and governments in the major donor countries. In addition, all three categories, that is, government agencies, national and international NGOs, often contribute their own resources to refugee programmes. The size of these contributions can be considerable but is seldom made known to UNHCR in detail. However, for the purpose of this evaluation, the roles of these organizations are presented primarily in terms of the size of funds administered under signed (sub-) agreements, since this constitutes the most effective and objective criterion for measuring their importance. It also allows comparisons to be made with the amount of financial and human resources that UNHCR allocates to the training of its partners.

39. The first paragraph of UNHCR's Statute states that the organization shall provide international protection to refugees and seek permanent solutions for the problem of refugees "by assisting governments and, subject to the approval of the governments concerned, private organizations".[13] The statute authorizes the High Commissioner to "administer [...] funds [... and to] distribute them among the private and, as appropriate, public agencies, which he deems best qualified to administer such assistance".[14] A recent review of implementing arrangements and implementing partner selection procedures concluded that, with the above, the statute "gives little guidance on who UNHCR should work with", so that "implementing arrangements have largely evolved as a result of trial and error".[15]

40. Yet, since the early 1950s, there have been few sudden changes in the evolution of the implementing arrangements. Most changes have usually been made in response to major longer-term shifts and transitions in the character of refugee situations as well as in the international community itself and its response to refugees' needs. For a long period, UNHCR channelled almost half its funds through its implementing partners, both

[13] Annex to General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950, Chap. I, para. 1.
[14] ibid., Chapter II, para. 10.
[15] Review of UNHCR Implementing Arrangements and Implementing Partner Selection Procedures, p. 7, Inspection and Evaluation Service, UNHCR, November 1997.

government agencies and national or international NGOs, as well as intergovernmental and UN organizations. Table I illustrates this pattern for the years 1991-98, although the trend was already firmly established by the late 1970s.

Table I. Proportion of voluntary funds disbursed through implementing partners (1991-98)[16]

Year	Overall disbursement (US$ millions)	Through partners (US$ millions)	%
1991	772	330	43
1992	1,017	340	33
1993	1,104	433	39
1994	1,090	509	47
1995	1,069	500	47
1996	1,070	515	48
1997	923	426	46
1998	792	358	45

41. In recent years, the most notable changes have been the growing role of NGOs as UNHCR partners, the rise in the number of NGOs (both national and international) and the gradual decline in the implementing role of government agencies, as reflected in the proportion of UNHCR expenditure channelled through both parties.

The growing role and number of NGOs

42. During the 1950s, when UNHCR mainly focused on refugee protection in Europe, the material needs of refugees were largely taken care of by the governments of the asylum countries. When UNHCR started programmes in Africa in the early 1960s, "it could no longer depend on asylum governments to provide relief, and NGOs were more scarce".[17] Faced with this new situation, UNHCR turned to other UN agencies and large international NGOs, such as the League of the Red Cross (today the IFRCS) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

43. In the 1970s, UNHCR expanded its operations into Asia and Latin America. Not only was the number of refugees rising rapidly, but the diversity of beneficiary groups was also growing, as UNHCR "began working on a large scale with returnees, with urban refugees as well as with internally displaced persons".[18] This period saw the beginning of large UNHCR programmes, as well as the birth of many NGOs in Europe and North America. In a number of countries, the role of government structures in the implementation of refugee programmes expanded and important government agencies came into existence, particularly in countries with large refugee populations.[19]

[16] The figures for the years 1991 to 1993 inclusive are taken from the Review of UNHCR Implementing Arrangements and Implementing Partner Selection Procedures, where they are presented under the heading "Proportion of Overall Budget Spent through Implementing Partners" (see p. 12 of the report). The figures for the years 1994 to 1998 inclusive are supplied by the Core Systems Development Section.
[17] ibid., p. 7, para. 22.
[18] ibid., p. 7, para. 24.
[19] The Commissioner for Refugees (COR) in Sudan, the National Refugee Commission (NRC) in Somalia, the Comisíon Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR) in Mexico, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees

Throughout these years and until the end of the 1980s, UNHCR's main partners were international and national NGOs and government agencies, in more or less equal numbers. This situation remained relatively stable for a long period, evolving very little.

44. At the beginning of the 1990s, a combination of factors brought an end to the parity in the size of funds channelled through NGOs on the one hand and government agencies on the other (see Table II). The factors that led to NGOs assuming a greater role as UNHCR partners, to the detriment of that of government agencies, are as follows.

Table II. Category of partner by level of expenditure (as a percentage of overall expenditure through partners in Table I) [20]

Category	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Govt. agencies	49	42	30	28	28	31	28
International NGOs	12	22	45.5	47	47	46	47
National NGOs	31	29	20	20	21	20	21
Intergovt. agencies	8	7	4.5	5	4	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

45. First, the outbreak of a number of large-scale refugee emergencies in the aftermath of the Cold War led to an unprecedented increase in funding, the lion's share of which was spent through NGOs in preference to multilateral channels, as the former were "seen as more efficient and less controversial".[21] The sharp rise in the number and scale of relief operations worldwide, as well as in funding levels, allowed many Western NGOs to develop into large and powerful organizations, each commanding budgets of hundreds of million of US dollars. "They have become more specialized and highly professional, rivalling and superseding UN agencies in technical expertise and capacity. [...] It is estimated that some 20 European and North American NGOs receive approximately 75 per cent of all public funds spent in emergencies."[22] This increase in funding and the mushrooming of emergencies also led to the creation of a large variety of new national and international NGOs, which subsequently became UNHCR partners (see Table III).

46. Second, many of the protracted refugee programmes in countries in which UNHCR had co-operated during the 1970s and 1980s with large government agencies as its partners contracted as a result of the start of major voluntary repatriation operations. This led to a decreasing proportion of UNHCR funds being spent through government agencies, a trend reinforced by the increased involvement of UNHCR in emergency situations where government structures had collapsed or were absent.

47. Third, the series of large-scale emergencies in the early 1990s also led to innovations in implementing arrangements. The Gulf crisis saw the use of standby arrangements with NGOs and military forces to support humanitarian programmes. Furthermore, "in Bosnia, UNHCR, making use of seconded personnel, undertook direct implementation on a scale that had not been attempted before. In [the former] Zaire,

(CAR) in Pakistan and the Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) in Ethiopia (ibid., p. 8, para. 26).

[20] Data for 1992 are unavailable. Consequently, this year has also been omitted in Table III.

[21] ibid., p. 10, para. 40.

[22] ibid., p. 10, para. 44.

when traditional implementation mechanisms proved overstretched, UNHCR developed the concept of service packages."[23]

Table III. Number of implementing partners by category and year (1991-98)

Category	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Government agencies	113	145	145	154	141	161	148
International NGOs	72	127	124	128	121	136	138
National NGOs	193	291	318	336	321	384	376
Intergovt. agencies	8	10	8	11	8	7	10
Total	386	573	595	629	591	688	672

48. In recent years, the number of subagreements concluded each year between UNHCR and its implementing partners (national and international NGOs) and government partners has ranged between 1,300 and 1,400.

[23] ibid., p. 9, para. 33. The scale of direct implementation in the former Yugoslavia might explain the sudden drop in the percentages of implementation through partners for the years 1992 and 1993 (see Table I).

The training effort

A historical perspective

49. During the 1980s and 1990s, UNHCR training activities for operational partners and government counterparts developed rapidly, thanks largely to senior management's growing concern with staff development. In these two decades, training came to include job training in a variety of areas, such as emergency management, programme management, protection and resettlement. Early on in this period, it was recognized that, to increase the impact of training on the organization's performance, it was necessary to provide training not only to UNHCR staff but also to its partners in refugee operations.

50. Among the milestones of this period was the opening, in 1986, of the Emergency Management Training Programme (EMTP) – successfully launched the year before – to implementing partners and government officials. This shift in focus followed the realization that emergency preparedness and response could only be effective if undertaken jointly, in a combined effort between the major partners. It was also recognized that joint training has many other benefits, including vital team-building elements. Since 1985, the EMTP has continued to develop steadily, and the composition of trainees – a mix of government officials, NGO personnel and UNHCR staff in roughly equal proportions – has remained a hallmark of the programme.

51. This programme also gave an added impulse to training and undoubtedly contributed to the realization by senior management of the need to develop a more comprehensive and high profile approach to UNHCR's rapidly evolving training needs. This, in turn, led to the creation, in 1987, of the Training Service (now the SDS), which initially reported directly to the Deputy High Commissioner (DHC).[24]

52. In the late 1980s, significant progress was made in the development of training materials, the creation of a network of training co-ordinators, the training of trainers and the institution of management training. A training recording system (TRS) was introduced to track and maintain information on all the training given to UNHCR and non-UNHCR staff on database. By 1990, there were 27 training "focal points" at headquarters (HQ) and 34 training co-ordinators in the field, whose responsibilities included the assessment of implementing partners' training needs and the organization of an appropriate response to these needs, in addition to organizing training for UNHCR staff.

53. The early 1990s saw a further consolidation of training activity, including a significant expansion in the development of training materials, the creation of a pool of in-house trainers and the extension of the training network to cover all field offices.

[24] *A Review of UNHCR Staff Training*, p. 1.

54. In 1990, responsibility for overseeing the Training Service was transferred from the DHC to a newly created Division of Human Resources Management, "with the aim of keeping the processes of recruitment, career development and training in close proximity to each other".[25] More and more, it was recognized that training should be seen as an integral part of a comprehensive human resources management strategy, that is, the management of UNHCR staff.

55. The appointment, in 1992, by the High Commissioner of a Task Force on Training launched a wide-ranging examination of the training process. A significant degree of attention was paid to the training of UNHCR's partners. The Task Force produced a coherent training strategy for UNHCR staff training, a central element of which was the introduction of a systematic link with training and individual performance. The CMS, "with its competency profiles and new system for performance evaluation", was "clearly intended to become the main channel for the identification of individual training needs".[26] Reference was also made to UNHCR's responsibility for training operational partners, which "should be taken into consideration by UNHCR field offices when planning programmes and training activities. Depending on the needs, training programmes should either be organized specifically for operational partners or their staff should be invited to participate in UNHCR's own training courses".[27] Nevertheless, these proposals lacked coherence and were much less comprehensive than the recommendations on UNHCR staff training.

56. The Task Force drew up an action plan, which envisaged that its goals would be achieved by the end of 1995, with a Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the DHC to oversee the implementation process and its final evaluation. However, members were never appointed to the Steering Committee.

57. In 1997, the TAB proposed a training strategy to maintain the principal emphasis on staff training.[28] With respect to the training of partners, it did little more than repeat the proposals made by the Task Force.

58. Largely owing to decentralization within UNHCR, the SDS was not in a position to put the recommendations on operational partner training into practice. Furthermore, because of the progressive decentralization and fragmentation of training in UNHCR, the section could no longer claim to bear overall responsibility for training. Whatever remaining involvement with partner training the SDS may have maintained at this stage was further marginalized in the wake of the introduction of the CMS in 1996, which forged a stronger and increasingly exclusive link between training and performance management of UNHCR's own staff.

59. Responsibility for developing a training strategy for operational partners was then taken over by another UNHCR section. Discussions in the framework of the PARINAC process had generated several new proposals, which brought the development of a specific strategy for implementing partner training back into focus. In 1998, the NGO Liaison Unit followed this up with their Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness proposal, which included new elements for the development of a specific

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[25] ibid., p. 2.
[26] ibid., p. 4.
[27] *Report of the Task Force on Training*, p. 34, February 1993.
[28] *A UNHCR Training Strategy, proposed by the Training Advisory Board* , June 1997.

training strategy for partners. So far, these recommendations have remained at the proposal stage. In the meantime, UNHCR has begun introducing the OMS, which provides new opportunities for the enhancing the effectiveness of implementing partners, and with which the development of an appropriate training strategy should closely align itself.

60. The need to develop such a strategy is paramount, since parallel initiatives, such as the "mainstreaming" of existing training programmes into regular UNHCR staff development activities, run the risk of making training gradually less accessible to UNHCR partners.

Management of the training programme

61. Three groups of UNHCR staff are central to the management of the training of operational partners and government counterparts: the network of field-based training co-ordinators; the small number of regional refugee law training co-ordinators; and the HQ-based staff known as training providers. The field-based training co-ordinators assume their functions on a voluntary basis, in addition to their regular duties. They form a network covering all UNHCR offices around the world. Their responsibilities include, inter alia, identifying operational partner training needs, providing support to a response, compiling an annual training plan and ensuring that the necessary financial requirements are included in each office's operational budgetary submissions. The organization of a response to the identified training needs may be undertaken locally by field office staff themselves (including the training co-ordinators) or by enrolling partner staff in training events organized by others. Among the latter, training activities organized by HQ-based training providers are the most frequently used.

62. Training providers at HQ comprise staff in sections or units who organize and deliver training activities, either as their exclusive function or as a main activity among several others. A training provider may or may not have staff specifically assigned to training functions. With the exception of the SDS, all such training providers are an integral part of work units responsible for a specific functional area within the organization. For example, protection training is organized by the Protection Support and Oversight Section within the Department of International Protection; emergency management training by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section; and People-Oriented Planning (POP) by (formerly) the Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Women.

63. A large proportion of formal and informal training organized in and by the field seems to go unreported. In any attempt to analyse UNHCR's training effort, only those activities that have been systematically recorded in the centralized TRS can be traced. A new chapter on training in UNHCR's situation reports was introduced to address this incomplete reporting, but it is too early to be of use for this review. Also, it is not possible to carry out searches on this system, and it is not likely that it will be used to gather information in the field in a way that will make centralized monitoring any easier.

The TRS

64. Any review of UNHCR's training activities needs to refer to and analyse statistics and other available data. Since 1987, UNHCR has maintained a data management system

to record training events and other information relevant to the organization of training activities. The operation of this TRS is the responsibility of the SDS. It is used to register training events, which are recorded in course summary lists, and includes such information as, inter alia, the venue and dates of courses, the names of the participants and a summary of the evaluations filled out by them. It was intended that, by recording the numbers of NGO, government and UNHCR trainees, as well as the participants from other UN agencies, the TRS would become the authoritative and official record of all UNHCR organized training.

65. However, a certain amount of caution is needed regarding the use of the TRS in analysing non-staff training. While the TRS can be considered a reasonably reliable record of UNHCR's global training effort of its own staff over the past few years, it is significantly less dependable as a record of non-staff training.

66. First, the recording of non-staff training has always been done much less systematically than that of staff training. The automatic link with the TRS and the personnel database, which is a separate system managed by the Personnel Data Unit, ensures that a record is made each time a member of staff participates in a training event on that person's fact sheet. This linkage puts a premium on recording the participation levels of UNHCR staff in training, although no such motivation exists for the rigorous recording of non-staff participation. This may have militated against the recording of non-staff participation levels.

67. Second, non-staff training is more likely to make use of informal training methods than staff training, and essentially only course participants in formal training workshops are recorded in the TRS. No central recording system exists for other approaches to structured learning, such as coaching, self-study, on-the-job training, distance learning and computer-based training. Until recently, UNHCR staff training was largely associated with attendance levels in formal workshops, which also constituted the bulk of training expenditure.[29] As the SDS is adopting new learning approaches for UNHCR staff, the TRS will in future become less important as a record of staff participation in development activities. For the moment, it provides a reasonably reliable picture of UNHCR staff development activities. However, the TRS is much less dependable where non-staff training is concerned, a large proportion of which has been delivered in the field through more informal arrangements, such as meetings and informal coaching, which are not systematically recorded in the TRS.[30]

68. Third, until recently non-staff participation in workshops organized by HQ-based training providers was more likely to have been systematically recorded than events organized by field-based staff. Only in 1999 were field officers finally encouraged to start recording their training of implementing partners more systematically, through the inclusion of a paragraph on that subject in the monthly situation reports. Until that date, however, it is highly probable that a considerable proportion of the training carried out, most of which was primarily targeted at implementing partners and government counterparts, has gone unreported.

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[29] *A Review of UNHCR Staff Training*, Chapter III, p. 15.

[30] In terms of non-staff training expenditure, at least 80 per cent is implemented by the field. Between 1994 and 1998, expenditure on non-staff participation in the training workshops ranged between 10 and 20 per cent.

69. In analysing the TRS data, two elements have been used to measure training output: first, the number of participants per event; and, second, the length of the training period. The "training volume" is arrived at by multiplying these two figures. It should be borne in mind that training beneficiaries have not always been consistently categorized by the TRS. Agencies such as the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the Swedish Rescue Services Board and Swiss Disaster Relief (SDR) have sometimes been grouped as NGOs, sometimes as government agencies.

Training activities

70. Between 1991 and 1998, 64 per cent of UNHCR staff, 15.5 per cent of government officials, 12.5 per cent of NGOs and eight per cent of the staff of intergovernmental organizations, other UN agencies and others made up the volume of UNHCR organized training recorded by the TRS (not a priori exclusively targeting UNHCR staff).[31] In this period, the proportion of UNHCR staff remained relatively stable, except for the years 1997 and 1998, which show a sudden increase in their participation levels. Taken together, NGO/government participation levels come to around 30 per cent, with the last two years showing a decline in participation rates (see Table IV).

Table IV. Training volume by category of trainees (1991-98)

	UNHCR	NGO	GOVT.	UN	OTHERS	TOTAL
1991	3,522	340	1,700	113	318	5,993
1992	3,496	813	653	111	334	5,407
1993	4,890	1,043	1,251	240	387	7,811
1994	5,390	914	1,633	96	390	8,423
1995	5,187	1,217	1,963	155	440	8,962
1996	5,802	2,007	2,081	268	577	10,735
1997	8,141	1,192	1,079	108	686	11,206
1998	10,376	1,489	933	326	1,235	14,359
	46,804	9,015	11,293	1,417	4,367	72,896

71. The figures for the proportion of the training volume of implementing partner staff and government officials represent average percentages over the entire period. A breakdown by year reveals that NGO participation is growing at the expense of government officials. This finding reflects the growing role of NGOs as UNHCR partners to the detriment of government agencies, as mentioned in paragraph 19, chapter 1.

72. Whereas UNHCR staff training has been organized in more than a dozen different subject areas, the training of implementing partners and government officials is, for the most part, provided in only six fields: durable solutions, emergency management, logistics/procurement, POP, programme management and protection. These areas represent 80 per cent of all the training undertaken by these two groups from 1991 to 1998.

73. Initially, emergency management and protection were the most sought-after course subjects. Over the years, however, interest in the other four areas has also grown. In the

[31] Training events recorded in the TRS that exclusively target UNHCR staff, such as CMS training and induction, are not relevant to this review and have, therefore, not been examined here.

early 1990s, emergency management was the NGO's favourite course subject, but, by the middle of the decade, POP had overtaken it in the popularity stakes, with protection training ranking third and programme management fourth. Interest in programme management training has risen gradually during this period.

74. The training of government officials has always covered a smaller number of subject areas than that of NGO staff. Initially, their training focused almost exclusively on the fields of emergency management and protection, but over the years other subject areas have become more popular, although these first two areas continue to make up more than half of all training effort.

Systematic needs assessment

75. In 1992-93, the Task Force on Training recognized that the organization of training was still suffering from a "lack of systematic analysis of the training needs of operational partners system [which is] particularly critical, since UNHCR's performance depends so heavily upon the effectiveness of such partners". The main cause of this inadequate assessment of training needs is the "lack of an appropriate methodology for structuring the needs assessment process, and the low priority given to training issues in most cases".[32] The result is that training activities are ad hoc and do not conform to an overall strategy. The choice of training programmes offered to operational partners is based more on what is available on the UNHCR staff training menu and what can be shared with partners than on what is actually needed in terms of improving the performance of the partner organizations. The only exceptions are the programmes that have been specifically designed with a mixed audience in mind, such as emergency management training and POP, as well as some protection training activities.

76. In 1993, the Task Force suggested that better tools for needs assessment should be developed by linking needs assessment to improved mechanisms for performance management, both of UNHCR staff and operational partners. In this respect, no distinction is made between the needs assessment analysis of UNHCR staff or of its operational partners – "Operational partner needs should be assessed using the same mechanism."[33] The introduction of the CMS for UNHCR staff, which includes a component that deals with training needs assessment through the submission of the CDP, marked in principle the resolution of this issue. However, an appropriate methodology and system for the identification of training needs of operational partners has still not been put in place.

77. In October 1995, the Board of Auditors pointed out the gaps in the training of implementing partners when it recommended that a "larger share of the available training slots should be earmarked for training of the personnel of major implementing partners to improve their understanding of UNHCR financial procedures and rules on programme management".[34]

78. Six months later, in March 1996, UNHCR's Standing Committee echoed the board's recommendations when it expressed the view that the training of implementing

[32] *Report of the Task Force on Training*, p. 32, para. 78 .
[33] ibid., p. 33, para. 82.
[34] *Report of the Board of Auditors for the period ended 31 December 1994*, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 46th Session, para. 129, 11 September 1995, A/AC.96.853.

partners should be regarded as "one of the keys to better compliance with UNHCR's programme management requirements". It also recognized that, since much of UNHCR's training programme had been devolved to the field, the TAB has a role to play in ensuring "that training which is deemed to be an organizational priority (such as programme management for UNHCR staff and implementing partners) is resourced and undertaken".

79. The TAB took up the challenge and attempted to outline a strategy for a training programme of implementing partners when it produced the UNHCR Training Strategy in 1997. It reiterated the importance of training operational partners and stressed that the assessment of training needs should be done in a consultative way. It introduced the idea that implementing partners are not only recipients of training but also represent a resource for the provision of training. The strategy included the assurance that mechanisms would be developed to ensure the appropriate monitoring and evaluation of training activities. Furthermore, it included concrete suggestions as to what to regard as priority training areas.

80. However, with respect to the key area of establishing a mechanism for the identification of training needs, the TAB proposals simply repeated what had already been recommended by the Task Force on Training in 1993. Then, the Task Force had recommended that "operational partner needs should be assessed using the same mechanisms [as used for UNHCR staff training needs assessment] in recognition of the fact that improved capacity in operational partners has a direct impact on UNHCR programme implementation capacity and effectiveness".[35] The TAB's new Training Strategy did little to advance this when, on needs assessment, it suggested that "although the CMS does not extend to staff of operational partners, the feasibility of establishing and sharing with them standard competencies and suggested benchmark training for various functional areas will need to be explored". It suggested that UNHCR's Competency Development Catalogue should be used to help identify training for the staff of operational partners.

81. The next, and most recent, phase in the attempts to develop a coherent strategy for the training of operational partners was the *UNHCR Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness,* issued by the NGO Liaison Unit in 1998. Again highlighting the crucial failure regarding needs assessment, the strategy proposed that consideration must be given to "identifying 'core competencies' for national NGO implementing partners" to help structure the training needs assessment process.

82. These consistent attempts at developing a specific training strategy for UNHCR partners have, however, never progressed beyond the proposal stage. The lack of follow-up can be explained by two factors. First, no clear stakeholder for partner training has ever been singled out. Ultimate responsibility for the training of partners has never been assigned to any particular section or unit in the organization in the way that the SDS is seen as responsible for staff development. A second factor is the continued association of partner training with UNHCR staff development, of which it is seen simply as an extension. As a result, the concepts applied to partner training have been essentially the same as those of UNHCR's staff training strategy, with its emphasis on the role of the supervisor. However, as the relationship between UNHCR and its partners is not a supervisory one, policy development in the area of partner training should have departed from a different set of principles altogether. Furthermore, dealing with a government

[35] *Report of the Task Force on Training,* p. 33, para. 82 .

department or an NGO partner has quite different implications for UNHCR. The framing of the needs assessment process in terms similar to the UNHCR staff development programme has, therefore, been inappropriate and ineffectual.

83. UNHCR needs to recognize that the concept of its own staff training is essentially different from the training of partners, principally because the relationships are not the same. A partner training strategy can only be effective if UNHCR moves beyond a supervisory role towards a true partner relationship. Training needs to be seen as one part of a joint process aimed at improving standards and enhancing performance and capabilities, for which UNHCR and its partners share a common responsibility. Developing the training of operational partners and government counterparts could also be greatly enhanced by placing it in the more comprehensive context of a wider capacity-building approach.

84. In view of the variety of different operations and the diverse profiles and needs of partner organizations, an improved management structure for training should be built on decentralized lines. And it needs to be reinforced, streamlined and made more consistent. Consideration needs to be given to the creation of regional partner development officer posts. Within a newly designed policy for the training of operational partners and government counterparts, these staff members should focus on developing individual development plans with, and for, partner organizations and government counterparts in their region. They should be supported and co-ordinated by a central function to be established at HQ, with specific responsibility for planning and overseeing implementing partner training activities. The SDS could provide technical support and should perhaps be given the authority to carry out quality control in programme design and training methods.

Identifying training priorities

85. Since UNHCR does not have a central monitoring and co-ordinating function for the training of implementing partners and government counterparts, the selection of subject areas and decisions on the volume of training are the responsibility of the training providers and field training co-ordinators. Data collected over a seven-year period (1991-98) show how the most important providers rank in terms of volume of training delivered (see Table V).

86. In the absence of a systematic process of identifying the training needs of UNHCR's partners, it is difficult to assess the adequacy of the resources allocated to training and the adequacy of the volume of training activities carried out. In comparison with the level of UNHCR expenditure for the training of its own staff (estimated to be up to 10 times higher) and considering that UNHCR channels almost half its global annual expenditure through its implementing partners, these resources appear to be on the low side. The same applies to the volume of training activities actually undertaken.

87. The selection of training subject areas and the relative importance given to each of them have been coincidental rather than the result of a systematic assessment of training needs or a working mechanism for determining training priorities. It would seem that the existence of a well-resourced staff development programme covering a wide variety of subjects and able to absorb a limited number of non-staff participants has been perceived as a ready response to the needs for UNHCR partner training. At the same time, enrolling

partner staff in existing training programmes has helped UNHCR avoid having to develop a programme specifically for partner training needs. Thus, the training programme for operational partners and government counterparts has been more often than not simply a question of adding some extra chairs around the table of a UNHCR staff development workshop. With some notable exceptions, particularly in the areas of emergency management and protection, non-staff training has, therefore, essentially been driven by supply rather than demand (or need). In the same vein, improving non-staff training has usually been defined as providing better access or offering more places in the existing UNHCR staff development programme.

Table V. Ranking of subject areas of training as a percentage of overall training effort for NGOs and government personnel (1991-98)

Subject area	NGOs	Govt.	Total
Protection	6	22	28
Emergency management	11	16	27
POP	9	3	12
Durable solutions	3	3	6
Programme management	3	1	4
Logistics / procurement	2	1	3
Other subjects	10	10	20
Total	44	56	100

88. UNHCR's Training Strategy, proposed by the TAB in June 1997, made it clear that "to be effective, training must be inextricably linked to the organization's overall strategy".[36] Furthermore, the strategy recognized the "crucial" role of senior management when it formulated as its first proposed action, "Endorsement by the SMC [Senior Management Committee] of a mechanism whereby annual priorities are set for strategic operational directions, communicated to the TAB as a basis for training priorities".[37]

89. Had the proposed mechanism been put in place, it would no doubt have by now established effective links with global objectives and training priorities, leading to a process whereby the objectives are analysed, areas of involvement identified and performance requirements defined. Adjustments to training priorities could have been made in an ongoing, co-ordinated and transparent way. More effective monitoring of implementation and compliance would logically follow. Unfortunately, in January 1999, when the SDS updated the implementation of the Training Strategy, the establishment of such a mechanism was "still awaited".[38] As a result, the overall training programme has lacked focus and coherence.

90. In the meantime and in the absence of a central function determining training priorities, the Board of Auditors has repeatedly and emphatically suggested several priority areas, particularly programme and financial management. UNHCR's own Training Strategy of 1997 listed protection, programme and financial management, and security training as priority areas for the training of partners. In practice, however, with the exception of protection, the actual delivery of training in these areas has remained

[36] *A UNHCR Training Strategy, proposed by the Training Advisory Board*, p. 1, para. 11.
[37] ibid., p. 4.
[38] *Update on the Implementation of Training Strategy*, SDS, January 1999.

negligible and the implementation of training activities has carried on relatively unaffected by the newly formulated priorities.

91. Only four per cent of partner training volume during the years 1991-99, for example, was in the area of programme management. Also, in comparison with the quantity of subagreements concluded each year, the number of implementing partner participants has remained low. This could be because the strategy has been to train implementing partners in the field, organized and delivered by field-based programme officers, rather than through partner participation in formal programme management workshops organized primarily for UNHCR staff. And field staff who are in daily contact with implementing partners are in the best position to identify their training needs and to respond appropriately. Indeed, to this end, the managerial and functional CMS responsibilities of programme officers at various grade levels were formulated to include managing, designing and delivering the training of implementing partners and government counterparts. However, the Training of Trainers programme, which was specially targeted at programme officers to enable them to assume these responsibilities, failed to attract much interest.

92. A training programme in financial management is still awaited. The Policy and Training Unit within the former DFMS (replaced by the Division of Resource Management) is gathering information and conducting a needs assessment with a view to developing financial training for implementing partners in the course of the year 2000.

93. Training to improve the security of staff is another area that the TAB has identified as a priority area, although only a small volume of training in this area has actually been delivered. According to TRS data, UNHCR partners were excluded from security training the year after the recommendations had been made. Initially, UNHCR developed a set of training modules and a workshop curriculum for security awareness training for which training providers were trained. This must have represented a significant initial investment, and it would appear that the Staff Safety Section (which is responsible for security awareness training) intended to provide a substantial volume of training, but was limited by budgetary constraints and a lack of commitment to its objectives.

Cost-effectiveness

94. In attempting to assess the cost-effectiveness of training, annual expenditure data were reviewed. Information is only available as of 1994, when UNHCR first included a budget code for allocations intended to cover the cost of training of implementing partners and government officials (Activity Code 97, under the relevant sector). However, caution is needed regarding the use of the available expenditure figures as an indication of the real spending on the training programme. The imprecise name of the budget line ("Training, Orientation, Seminar, Etc", the only non-specific code among some 140 other activity codes in the Financial Management Information System [FMIS] budget system) has left it open to be used as a multipurpose contingency fund to which all sorts of unforeseen spending can be charged, a practice that seems to have been widespread.

95. Another reason why the expenditure records are not reliable indicators of the implementation of non-staff training is that, in some cases, costs for the design and development of programmes targeted at UNHCR staff and not only implementing

partners and government officials have also been charged to the budget for training implementing partners.

96. A superficial comparison between the annual expenditure data and the volume of training activities for UNHCR staff training programme and non-staff training lends further support for the need to use the data carefully. As shown in paragraph 47, 64 per cent of the training effort went to UNHCR staff and 28 per cent to implementing partners and government officials. Yet, consistently during this period, spending for non-staff training was twice as high in absolute terms as spending for staff training. This discrepancy can only be explained by the observations made in the previous paragraph.

97. The problems of unreliable data have been recognized and in recent years measures have been taken to enhance the quality and reliability of UNHCR records. The new programming guidelines issued by UNHCR for the training of implementing partners for the 1999 financial year were intended to provide the organization with a more meaningful set of data for monitoring and evaluation. Preliminary information suggests that this has been successful. The 1999 expenditure for implementing partner training is a fraction of the expenditure reported during previous years, without an equally significant decrease in reported training activities.[39] Only in later years will analysis using this information be able to provide an accurate basis for assessing cost-effectiveness.

98. However, it has become clear that the costs of different training activities vary widely. Many training providers often organize training events simultaneously, sometimes for the same audience and in near-complete isolation, without any concerted effort to reduce costs. This could, for instance, be achieved by, among other means, combining and organizing back-to-back events, designing joint standards and selecting the most cost-effective venues.

Enhancing the impact of training

99. In recent years, exchanges between UNHCR and the Board of Auditors have focused on introducing measures to increase the effectiveness of training. However, owing to the lack of follow-up, most of the recommendations generated by these exchanges have never reached the implementation stage. In 1996, for example, the board identified the high turnover of implementing partner staff as an important negative factor on training, and recommended that UNHCR obtain an assurance from the agencies concerned that recently trained staff would remain in the same area of work for an appropriate period. UNHCR agreed that it would issue advisory guidelines to address this problem. A suggestion was also made to include a contractual obligation in subagreements for partners to place staff trained under UNHCR auspices in a job closely related to the area of the training received for a set period of time. The opportunity to introduce this change in standard subagreements presented itself when, in 1997, a major overhaul of the Standard Clauses for Subagreements was launched. Unfortunately, it was an opportunity UNHCR failed to seize.

100. The expectations from this proposal were, however, most likely excessive. It is doubtful whether this particular revision of the Standard Clauses, if implemented, would

[39] Estimated to have remained at no more than 10 to 20 per cent of the level of annual expenditure reported over the previous five years.

have made much of a difference in practice – it would not have been the first contractual clause to remain largely unheeded. Moreover, doubts have been raised about the degree to which the perceived high turnover of implementing partner staff really is an important factor. Systematic and reliable information on this phenomenon is unavailable, but during interviews conducted for this review it transpired that, in many situations, job mobility is unimportant. Other factors, such as rotation to other posts within the same organization, the level of experience of a person at the moment he/she receives training, or the timing of training in the context of the programming cycle, play an equally important role. Consequently, it might be useful to look at whether the high turnover of UNHCR staff might be a more important issue than the turnover of agency staff. More research needs to be carried out into this issue to obtain a more complete profile of UNHCR's partners for the purpose of planning training activities.

101. In any case, it is clear that more work is needed to place training within a more solid and coherent framework, with greater commitment on the part of trainee organizations. Alternatively, if UNHCR were to accept the training of partners as a vital and permanent function of all field offices, any perceived high turnover would be just another element to include in the planning and management of training. In the latter case, a strong and coherent framework would be required.

102. Closely related to the perceived high turnover of staff is the limited control UNHCR has over the selection of trainees enrolled by operational partners and governments. It is crucial that UNHCR maintains a degree of control over this process to ensure that training is targeted at people in strategically relevant positions, so that training has the strongest possible effect on operations. Joint planning and preparation of training to ensure a sense of ownership on the part of participating partner organizations would appear to be the most effective ways of dealing with this problem.

103. Conversely, it should be borne in mind that the training of implementing partners and government officials often has several objectives. Unlike UNHCR staff training, the overall intention of which is to enhance individual job performance, in the training of other categories different considerations are often paramount. Improving individual professional performance may still often be the stated goal, but other aims such as team-building or enhancing external relations may, in fact, also be important. There is evidence that enhancing relations has sometimes been the overriding incentive behind UNHCR's offers of training to organizations and/or individuals.

104. Another way of enhancing the impact of training is by implementing new planning mechanisms in the field of emergency management training. In EPRS, the realization that many partner staff members trained in emergency management were regularly being moved, when their enhanced skills would have been useful in an actual emergency operation, led to the decision to plan training events differently. Emergency management training events have always been targeted at selected regions perceived to be emergency-prone. For practical organizational reasons, the time between the decision to organize a training event in a certain region and the actual delivery of the workshop could be as long as two years. By that time, the envisaged linkage between a perceived need for training and the actual delivery of the training event had often been lost. But if planning were more flexible and allowed for the timing as well as the contents of the training session to be organized and designed more directly with needs, then more of an impact could be achieved.

105. In comparison with the number of subagreements (relatively constant, at around 1,300 per annum), the participation levels of implementing partners in programme management training have remained extremely low. If one takes the number of subagreements as an indication of the volume of potential training need, then no more than 10 per cent of potential trainees ever received training during the years 1996-98. In this period, UNHCR shifted the focus from implementing partner staff taking part in programme management workshops to training events organized by field-based programme officers. However, the Training of Trainer workshops, which were initially organized to equip programme officers for this role, were discontinued. The publication, in 1996, of the *Programme Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners*, though, has gone a long way towards addressing the learning needs of implementing partners.

106. The absence of any systematic monitoring and evaluation of training activities has contributed to the sometimes extremely high expectations placed on the training of partners. This has led many UNHCR members of staff to believe that any problems with compliance can be solved by training. And continued non-compliance has been seen as the result of too little training. The expectation that training is almost always the correct, and in any case an easy and non-confrontational response to lack of compliance, has had the effect of invariably drawing attention away from finding more imaginative and effective solutions to these problems. In some cases, a more systematic assessment of training needs might have revealed that the effects of training would be considerably enhanced when combined with genuine efforts to address other possible reasons for non-compliance in a joint capacity-building approach.

Selection procedures

107. Any future training strategy for operational partners and government counterparts should pay attention to the selection process of NGO implementing partners as the important first step in their relations with UNHCR. For obvious reasons, UNHCR's involvement in the selection, as implementing partners, of government departments is essentially different. Through the application of selection criteria, the organization determines to a large extent the quality of service rendered by operational partners. Unfortunately, the selection process has not been used as an opportunity to make a systematic joint assessment of training needs and to formulate a joint training plan, including induction training.

108. UNHCR needs to revise, jointly with PARINAC representatives, the current selection criteria and to develop a set of basic competencies that could be used in the selection of NGOs and in the evaluation of NGO performance.

New ways of learning

109. In the policy documents on training generated by UNHCR over the past few years, there has been a growing awareness that the concept of "training" has become inadequate to describe many of the activities intended to enhance the performance of operational partners and government counterparts. The *Review of UNHCR Staff Training* allocated a chapter to this issue in reference to UNHCR staff training, but many of the recommendations made there would also be relevant to the training of partners.

110. There have been several ambitious initiatives by a number of individual Training providers in their own areas of responsibility. Some have developed self-study learning materials or materials to be used in training by UNHCR field staff, such as the *Programme Management Handbook for Operational Partners*. Also, the Protection Outreach programme and the protection *Field Guide for NGOs* have been important steps in this direction. The new OMS devotes a key place to joint operations planning, in a shared effort between UNHCR and its partners. Once this mechanism takes firm hold in the management of UNHCR operations worldwide, it will gradually become the preferential mechanism for articulating learning needs. Joint missions and structured joint lessons-learned exercises could also be used more often as learning opportunities. Much more could be done to pool ideas, resources, experience and lessons learned for the benefit of everyone. UNHCR needs to try to understand how the systematic use of these concepts and ideas could be usefully applied to the planning of more appropriate learning interventions on behalf of its operational partners.

111. In recent years, NGOs have taken important initiatives to improve their performance in humanitarian response as well as in their accountability to beneficiaries, donors and other major stakeholders. In 1994, the Code of Conduct arose specifically within the Red Cross movement to promote the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian interventions by NGOs. In 1996, NGOs launched the Sphere Project, with a view to improving the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system. UNHCR has actively supported and participated in the development of this project. Continuing to support these and other similar initiatives would be an excellent way of developing and improving the effectiveness of NGO implementing partners, and might eventually replace some of the training that UNHCR has provided, or has intended to provide, over the years.

Monitoring and evaluation

112. The TRS was introduced to monitor the implementation of training activities but, as has been previously noted, it cannot be regarded as a reliable record of partner training activities. Recently, new monitoring systems have been introduced at UNHCR that will hopefully improve the availability of reliable information for the management of training. Tracking training activities and participation levels are prerequisites for evaluating the impact of training, both on individuals and on organizational goals. At present, evaluation is limited to participants filling out a form at the end of a seminar – usually referred to as “participants’ feedback evaluation”.

113. Much effort has been made in the area of UNHCR staff training to improve evaluation levels. And there is certainly more room in the training of partners for a more systematic evaluation of the extent to which training furthers the goal of the organization. The SDS has a place in this challenge by providing technical guidance and support to training providers.