The State of UNHCR's Organisation Culture:

What now?

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) is committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects and practices. EPAU also promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR and encourages an active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policymakers and the research community. All of these activities are undertaken with the purpose of strengthening UNHCR's operational effectiveness, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to fulfil its mandate on behalf of refugees and other displaced people. The work of the unit is guided by the principles of transparency, independence, consultation, relevance and integrity.

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Executive Summary

"The State of UNHCR's Organisation Culture" is the report of a research project conducted within UNHCR between November 2003 and December 2004.

Aims of this project

1. Through a collaborative process, to determine the highest priorities for the organisation related to the findings of the report for action, and to identify strategic or practical interventions that may assist in addressing these core issues.
2. To identify processes currently underway that aim to, or have potential to, address any of the identified priority areas and to discuss the strengths and risks of these processes as they pertain to cultural elements.
3. To act as a bridge, when appropriate, between separate relevant processes that may benefit from greater cohesion, communication and resource sharing.

Findings: Highest Priorities

Of all the themes that emerged through the original report, the vast majority of participants agreed upon 3 core areas that are of primary current importance for the organisation to address:

- Increased cohesion at the senior management level
- Development of management and leadership skills
- Accountability

Emerging from the discussions of these particular issues were a number of recurring sub themes. In particular, and connected to both the issue of accountability and management skills, were:

- Performance management
- Career development
- Promotions and postings
- In addition, most, but not all, women interviewed considered gender equity a high priority.

The main paper discusses the key concerns raised during the most recent round of interviews, examines some of the current initiatives underway that may have some bearing on these concerns, particularly from an organizational culture perspective, and then makes some recommendations that either augment these initiatives or suggest areas where gaps were perceived.

1. Senior Management

Participants emphasised the need for the Senior Management Committee and the troika to be leading the way in visibly establishing the organisational climate, setting an example, demonstrating integrity in the implementation of policies, managing poor performance effectively and engaging in genuine dialogue and relationship building with the rest of the staff. Senior managers themselves proposed that the SMC should function more efficiently, develop a stronger role with a clearer relationship to the troika, including as a policy review body, and find more opportunities to work together creating greater cohesion and a stronger sense of corporate identity that transcends individual terrains.

A strong connection was made between a modelling of greater cohesion and communication at the SMC level and above, and the potential for this to filter down to other levels and across programmes. The problem of developing the skills of the more senior managers was raised, as was a perception at this level of a lack of resources and support for both undertaking their roles, including managing the performance of others, along with limited assistance and guidance in career development management.

2. Management skills

A balance needs to be achieved between both supporting and reinforcing positive managerial skill, and firm, direct and honest management of performance issues and breaches of ethics. The pervasive belief that nothing will be done with regards to positive or negative performance leads to pessimism and lack of confidence in the leadership of supervisors and managers, undermining their effectiveness.

One of the strongest themes to emerge was a belief that the "people management skills" of managers should be valued more highly within the organisation and that the development of managers should be the number one priority. The skills that came up consistently in discussions as being of priority included leadership, motivating staff, team building, coaching and mentoring, people skills, sensitivity, clear values, staff supervision, communication, staff support and development, delegation, general human resource skills and managing the PAR process. Without clear authority to manage performance issues and with a fear of the ramifications of giving honest feedback, managers are reluctant to tackle issues unless they are extreme.

3. Accountability

Accountability is talked about frequently and is one of the greatest concerns of UNHCR staff at all levels, however the concept of accountability covers a number of different issues and it is not always clear that there is a shared meaning. From the day to day accountability for doing good work, managing

well, attaining goals, through the systems for ensuring that global vision and spending match and are coordinated and contained, to the alarming tales of corruption and behind the scenes punishment and retaliation, there is a strong perception in the organisation that there is insufficient accountability and this taints the image people have of the organisation they wish to be proud of. Along with the desire for higher quality leadership and management, this idea of accountability is also strongly linked with the dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the PAR.

Current Relevant Organisation-Wide Initiatives

Throughout the course of the project, the following initiatives presented as those underway at the moment that seem most likely to have some positive impact upon the priority issues identified above. Strengths and risks of these initiatives are discussed in the body of the paper.

Executive Office
- Global Strategic Objectives

DHRM
- Workforce strategy
- Management Development
- Gender Equity Policy

CDEGEC
- Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (discussed in tandem with the gender Equity Policy above)

ODMS
- Results Based Management

DFSM
- Risk Management Pilot Project

Summary of Strategic and Practical Interventions

The majority of interventions recommended are developed with the following underlying aims and messages:
- Visibility, commitment, communication and transparency of and by senior management are absolutely key to the transformation of the organisation culture and improvement of organisation climate and performance over time.
- Much can and should be done without significant cost to the organisation, utilizing the skills and expertise amongst staff.
- There is a connection between cultural barriers within the organisation and problems with managing, monitoring and optimizing funds. The way the organisation operates is currently financially inefficient and strategies to resolve this must tackle cultural elements in order to succeed.

1. Regular communication with all staff both in the field and at headquarters from senior leadership, including strong, courageous and visible support and backup for both the workforce management strategy and RBM.

2. Support for the participation of the SMC in the 360-degree project.

3. Clarify and improve the role and function of the SMC in the areas of strategic planning, policy development and management, decision-making, authority and maintaining a global perspective on the organisation, and communicate this to staff.

4. Accountability will be improved in part through the RBM strategy in the longer term. This report supports the RBM gap analysis recommendations regarding both accountability and performance management, along with the new strategic planning structures. In addition, senior management needs to talk about accountability regularly and publicly, conveying that it is taken seriously and that action is taken effectively.

5. The performance review system needs to be improved through addressing the human barriers to its effective implementation.

6. Achievements need to be visible in a timely manner.

7. High level support for the development and institutionalization of a multifaceted management development approach.

8. Coordinate functions and resources for effectively to make UNHCR a more efficient organization in many ways, including financially. For example, linking of the currently disparate processes of performance review, 360 degree feedback, assessment, promotions and postings, management development, coaching, RBM. Through, for example, structured and time limited working groups led by SMC members.

9. The work currently being done to achieve gender equity in the organisation needs not only stated support from senior levels, but also requires practical strategies to back this up and ensure that progress is made, overcoming the cultural barriers that stand in the way.

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Context for the project

"The State of UNHCR's Organisation Culture"[1] is the report of a research project conducted within UNHCR between November 2003 and December 2004. The report was published in May 2005 through the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit in collaboration with the Staff Development Section and a staff forum was held in June 2005, chaired by the Assistant High Commissioner, where key findings were presented, followed by discussion. The overall response to the report gave a clear indication that further follow up was necessary to promote the undertaking of concrete measures to address elements of the findings.

Aims of this project

4. Through a collaborative process, to determine the highest priorities for the organisation related to the findings of the report for action, and to identify strategic or practical interventions that may assist in addressing these core issues.
5. To identify processes currently underway that aim to, or have potential to, address any of the identified priority areas and to discuss the strengths and risks of these processes as they pertain to cultural elements.
6. To act as a bridge, when appropriate, between separate relevant processes that may benefit from greater cohesion, communication and resource sharing.

Methodology

Individual consultations were conducted with around 35 stakeholders representing a cross section of levels and interests across headquarters, with a small representation from the field. Invited participants included senior staff previously consulted at the second draft stage of the report, and other staff bringing a range of perspectives. Participants had input regarding prioritisation for action and their expertise was drawn upon to assist in the shaping of recommendations.

Consultation with the field and others was sought through an all staff invitation on the intranet to participate. A small number of field and HQ based staff responded and were followed up through face-to-face, telephone interviews or via email. A draft of the paper was circulated to most participants for further comment.

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[1] http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/research/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RESEARCH&id=428db1d62

Relevant reports were collected or sourced throughout the course of the project and a number are referred to. In particular the 2004 UN Integrity Survey[2] is drawn upon in the formulation of this paper due to its importance to the UN overall and its relevance to the key issues currently concerning UNHCR. Integrity, and staff perception and experience, are integral elements and indicators of organisation culture, relating strongly to workplace climate and morale, therefore it is worth locating UNHCR's experience within that of the wider UN system.

Findings

Highest Priorities

Of all the themes that emerged through the original report, the vast majority of participants agreed upon 3 core areas that are of primary current importance for the organisation to address. These were (and not in any particular order):

- Increased cohesion at the senior management level
- Development of management and leadership skills
- Accountability

Emerging from the discussions of these particular issues were a number of recurring sub themes, where people thought some of the main problems or solutions lay. In particular, and connected to both the issue of accountability and management skills, were:
- Performance management
- Career development
- Promotions and postings
- In addition, most, but not all, women interviewed considered gender equity a high priority.

The 2004 UN-wide Integrity Survey identified the following 5 issues for the UN overall to address in order to improve perceptions of integrity: Tone at the Top, Staff Accountability, Supervisor Commitment, Ethnocentrism, and Resource Allocation. It would appear that the first 3 from this list correlate almost exactly with the top 3 priorities identified by UNHCR staff.

It should be noted that as this project was undertaken exclusively at headquarters and only a limited number of staff currently in the field were able to participate, these priorities may necessarily reflect a headquarters perspective.

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[2] http://www.un.org/News/ossg/sg/integritysurvey.pdf. United Nations Organizational Integrity Survey, 2004, Final Report, Report Prepared By Deloitte Consulting Llp

Greater field input may have revealed some additional priorities, however, the issues raised clearly impact equally in the field.

This paper discusses the key concerns raised during the most recent round of interviews, examines some of the current initiatives underway that may have some bearing on these concerns, particularly from an organizational culture perspective, and then makes some recommendations that either augment these initiatives or suggest areas where gaps were perceived.

1. Senior Management

People interviewed emphasised the need for the Senior Management Committee and the troika to be leading the way in visibly establishing the organisational climate, setting an example, demonstrating integrity in the implementation of policies, managing poor performance effectively and engaging in genuine dialogue and relationship building with the rest of the staff. This included a desire to hear from the High Commissioner himself on a regular basis with regards to achievements, challenges and resources, for example. It was suggested that well directed and constructive forums for staff could increase a sense of "connection", and that staff cynicism is fuelled by insufficient opportunities to discuss and debate organisational issues as a part of a positive process. Such cynicism is frequently expressed through expressed beliefs such as that leadership within UNHCR is "not serious and acting according to what they're saying".

The recommendations of the UN Integrity Survey regarding senior management relate very closely to the concerns of UNHCR staff:
"Changing Tone at the Top will improve staff perceptions of Organizational Integrity. To improve Tone at the Top means the UN must focus on changing staff perception of senior leaders. This is particularly true of staff perceptions of how senior leaders place their values and ethics ahead of their personal interests, aspirations or prior relationships. This can be achieved through acts and statements that set an appropriate example of ethical behavior, as well as an effort to communicate these behaviors to staff. In other words, leaders must lead by example and be held to an even higher standard regarding all things ethical. In addition, leaders must take prompt and decisive actions against those who breach the professional guidelines regardless of prior personal or professional relationships."

Senior managers themselves proposed that the SMC should function more efficiently, develop a stronger role with a clearer relationship to the troika, including as a policy review body, and find more opportunities to work together

creating greater cohesion and a stronger sense of corporate identity that transcends individual terrains. This included simply more mechanisms to communicate and exchange ideas for all directors in all divisions, as well as increased longer term strategic planning and joint projects or functions. A review of the previous middle and senior management learning programmes found that the weakest performance area of senior managers was in fact strategic planning. It was commented that the culture of the organisation cannot change sufficiently without effective long term vision and planning on behalf of the SMC.

A very strong connection was made between a modelling of greater cohesion and communication at the SMC level and above, and the potential for this to filter down to other levels and across programmes. Improved links and collaboration between divisions, between operations and support, and between various functions and representatives, for example, were widely felt to be critical, and difficult to achieve without corresponding cohesion evident at the senior management level.

The problem of developing the skills of the more senior managers was raised a number of times. There is concern at an apparent reluctance at the D1 and 2 levels to engage in the available learning activities, receive feedback or accept supervision. While clearly time is an issue particularly at this level, the impact of visibly and publicly modelling and engaging in learning and development cannot be underestimated. Some efforts in this regard are being made, for example to tailor learning programmes to the specific needs and demands of the more senior roles, and the 360 feedback exercise, both of which are discussed further below. The other side of the coin to this is a perception at this level of a lack of resources and support for both undertaking their roles, including managing the performance of others, along with limited assistance and guidance in career development management, something that concerns staff at every level.

2. Management skills

Again, the findings of the UN Integrity Survey correlate closely with a number of the common themes and are therefore reproduced here in order to reiterate the points that were made and then to highlight the direct connection with current concerns in UNHCR:
"Improving the Supervisor Commitment factor will occur by: encouraging the level and quality of dialogue about ethics and integrity issues, including day-to-day interactions and decision making. Also, the extent to which a supervisor is seen to place the UN's values and ethics ahead of his/her personal interests greatly influences staff perception of Organizational Integrity. Finally, when UN employees feel comfortable approaching their supervisor about an ethical

concern, regardless of that individual's formal role or level, perception of Supervisor Commitment and Organizational Integrity improve.

…None of these improvements can be achieved through mandate, but will require a very concerted effort, mostly on the part of supervisors, and those who train and manage them. Changing supervisor behavior will require both reward and discipline beginning at the highest levels and cascading throughout the Organization to even the most remotely located duty station and work group supervisor. Promoting and making public positive role models and consistently disciplining those who violate ethical standards will enhance staff perceptions over time."

These last sentences highlight the balance that needs to be achieved between both supporting and reinforcing positive managerial skill, and firm, direct and honest management of performance issues and breaches of ethics. The pervasive belief that nothing will be done with regards to positive or negative performance, as is discussed also further below, leads to pessimism and lack of confidence in the leadership of supervisors and managers, undermining their effectiveness. It should also be pointed out that these practices as outlined above will impact not only or exclusively upon perceptions of integrity, but are integrally related to such factors as morale and positive managerial practices.

One of the strongest themes to emerge was a belief that the "people management skills" of managers should be valued more highly within the organisation and that the development of managers should be "our number one priority". While the newly developed management learning program continues to evolve in response to experience and feedback, many people felt it is insufficiently backed by the organisation with clear messages regarding the valuing of learning and development, or a commitment to using the programme as a prerequisite for management roles. As a result, participation is entirely optional and many supervisors and managers are not accessing the broad range of knowledge this program offers, rendering its concepts and influence inconsistent across the organisation. The skills that came up consistently in discussions as being of priority included leadership, motivating staff, team building, coaching and mentoring, people skills, sensitivity, clear values, staff supervision, communication, staff support and development, delegation, general human resource skills and managing the PAR process.

The review of the previous middle and senior management learning programmes found that the weakest performance area of middle management was managing performance and coaching. It seems that there are many barriers, limited skills and little support for managers, even at the most senior levels, to actively supervise the performance of people reporting to them. Without clear authority to manage performance issues and with a fear of the ramifications of

giving honest feedback, managers are reluctant to tackle issues unless they are extreme. The choice seems to be, at for example a bureau director level, to either take on a "full time job" of defending a low performance rating, or to "write off" a country operation until rotation solves the problem of a poor or mediocre representative. A number of managers said they wished there was someone they could contact in the organisation for advice and ongoing guidance and support when faced with performance issues. In addition to wider access to expert information on how to conduct a fair process according to organisational rules to protect both themselves and the staff members involved, guidance in the interpersonal skills required to supervise staff effectively could save time in the long run and potentially reduce the amount of adversarial situations and bitterness.

Some senior managers commented that coaching has proven useful in improving performance; however problems lie not only in the limited numbers of people with coaching skills but also in factors such as the vast numbers of senior staff and representatives reporting to one director. In addition to the lack of regular supervision and coaching it was also noted that there is little preparation or orientation offered prior to the taking up of new roles, even in the context of the highly complex, sensitive and political roles at senior levels, where there are vast implications for poor performance and little capacity for adequate ongoing support.

In the absence of ongoing support and development of people in their supervisory and management roles, it seems little wonder that there is also considerable concern across the organisation at the moment regarding the lack of obvious candidates to replace the significant number of directors due to retire in the next few years. The following quote suggests a link between policies that reflect the culture of the organisation and the longer term consequences;

> "There aren't as many outstanding people at the mid levels as there used to be. It's the result of our egalitarian policies. We've averaged out."

Succession planning is something that is now concerning many people. It should be seen in the context of an overall strategy to lift the standard and quality of management in the organisation, thereby greatly broadening the pool of potential candidates for senior positions in the medium and longer term. In addition, practices such as those that prevent good performers from advancing more rapidly than average or poor performers need to be reassessed.

3. Accountability

Accountability is talked about frequently and is one of the greatest concerns of UNHCR staff at all levels, however the concept of accountability covers a

number of different issues and it is not always clear that there is a shared meaning. Given the nature of concerns, the latest global strategic objectives[3], as discussed further in the next section, go some way to highlight the issue, but could address the issue in more depth.

According to the UNHCR Financial Empowerment and Accountability Framework[4],
"The essence of accountability is an obligation to disclose the rationale for decisions taken and to explain the results achieved (or not achieved). Accountability denotes an obligation to report and "to account" and answer questions on performance and results to those who have delegated responsibility and authority. Being related to "disclosure", transparency is an accompanying condition of accountability."

The Humanitarian Accountability Project – International (HAP-I)[5] adds another element;
"…Accountability is also about the right to a say and the duty to respond. The HAP-I definition of accountability therefore involves two sets of principles and mechanisms;
· Those by which individuals, organizations, and States account for their actions and are held responsible for them.
· Those by which individuals, organizations, and States may safely and legitimately report concerns, complaints, and abuses, and get redress where appropriate."

The UN Integrity Survey findings emphasize this connection between accountability, conduct, ethics and perceptions of integrity;
"Because of its high relative impact, improving the Staff Accountability factor will improve staff perceptions of integrity. The data suggest several areas that will increase perceptions of Staff Accountability. These include: increasing the level of protection against reprisals for staff reporting violations of the guidelines on professional conduct; improving the fairness in which performance—both ethical and accountable—is recognized; improving employee vigilance (and follow-up) in ensuring others adhere to ethical standards of conduct: conducting (and communicating) that a proper review or investigation of breaches of conduct has occurred; and disciplining (swiftly and summarily) those who violate guidelines on professional conduct. These activities will improve perceptions of Organizational Integrity if they are made known to staff members."

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3 UNHCR Global Strategic Objectives for 2007-2009

4 UNHCR Financial Empowerment and Accountability Framework. How to nurture a high-performance organisation in a decentralized environment, DFSM

5 http://www.hapinternational.org/en/page.php?IDpage=64&IDcat=10

As mentioned, accountability in UNHCR is often talked about on a number of levels. There is the "every day" accountability that comes with roles and is linked with responsibilities, outcomes and results. Some people felt that specific accountabilities are not always clear, and there is a belief that the structure and system of the UN, including indefinite contracts, lead to a complacency that negatively impacts on people's sense of their own accountability and motivation. On the other hand, the point was also made that job security invites loyalty and commitment to the organisation, and other negative side effects of large numbers of staff on short term contracts have been noted in a number of research studies involving international non-government organisations.

At the broader programme and country level, there appear few mechanisms to clearly identify whether operations are in fact achieving what they said they would within the budget they identified. With programme coordination under the control of operations and budget and finance under the Deputy High Commissioner, there is limited coordinated ability to analyse programmes and activities against outcomes, relative costs and financial efficacy, and to place each in the context of the global whole. This appears to reflect the expressed lack of coordination at the senior management level and the sense of fragmentation of functions and interests down the line, impacting upon the organisation's ability to manage overall priorities and vision, and to most effectively analyse, manage and contain spending.

In addition, there is a disparity between Headquarter and country operations, where there has not been an equivalent of the country operation plan for headquarter sections, who therefore have, at this stage, even fewer accountability mechanisms. As a part of the institutionalisation of Results Based Management, however, changes are being introduced this year, including the introduction of a strategic plan for all Headquarters Divisions and Bureaux and the inclusion of terms of reference that describes the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of these organizational entities.

Another common context in which accountability is raised is in the area of breaches of conduct or rules, where there is a strong perception in the organisation, paralleling that in the UN as a whole, that little is done to sanction anything other than the most high profile, serious breaches that in a sense "force the hand" of the organisation to act. As the integrity survey points out, even if action is taken, unless it is communicated well to staff, perceptions will remain that little is done, effectively serving to lower morale and foster cynicism. As one person commented, "what is the motivation *not* to be corrupt?" In fact, it was mentioned that lack of visible follow up and decisive action had the effect of allowing informal sanctions to flourish, where people are pressured to

participate in cover ups and to keep quiet about corruption, and do so due to their lack of confidence that support will be forthcoming from headquarters.

In between these levels of accountability is a more interpersonal accountability that is alluded to when people talk of, for example, the way people treat each other, and in particular, the way some managers are perceived to treat their staff. Stories exist throughout the organisation regarding managers who abuse, intimidate or just generally treat their staff in a consistently unsupportive manner. In the absence of extremely clear expectations that this kind of behaviour is unacceptable and active assurance that people develop the skills the organisation requires of them, the organisation appears to be unaccountable to its staff with regard to their well being. Unless the behaviour is so extreme as to constitute a clear and irrefutable breach of the code of conduct, there is a sense of pessimism that there are any safeguards, and even in the more extreme cases the system is still not always felt to be reliable.

From the day to day accountability for doing good work, managing well, attaining goals, through the systems for ensuring that global vision and spending match and are coordinated and contained, to the alarming tales of corruption and behind the scenes punishment and retaliation, there is a strong perception in the organisation that there is insufficient accountability and this taints the image people have of the organisation they wish to be proud of. Along with the desire for higher quality leadership and management, this idea of accountability is also strongly linked with the dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the PAR.

3.1. Performance management

As is discussed in considerable detail in the original report, the current system of performance review is felt to be very unsatisfactory in the way it is implemented. Effective use of this tool has been hampered by such factors as problematic relations between managers and their staff, beliefs that a critical review will entail months of work in defending it, lack of skills and will to implement it properly, a pervasive desire to avoid conflict and lack of adequate organisational systems to address more than superficial aspects of its problems.

A number of spin off consequences occur as a result of this poor performance of the performance review system. For example, in the absence of other means of evaluating staff, little trusted information is available when selecting staff for posts or promotions. This encourages an informal system of referee checking amongst networks, where old rumours and out of date information may well be recycled. People may potentially never combat or renew a flawed reputation. In addition, it disadvantages staff who in fact do receive and accept a more accurate

assessment of their performance, rendering a "fair" review "unfair" when they are compared against their less accurately assessed colleagues.

The PAR is not meaningfully linked to staff and career development, where there should be an ability to move from identifying current and future learning needs related to current and desired roles as a result of the feedback, and some facility for setting realistic goals for meeting these needs. An internal review of the PAR system in 2003 concluded that, "if the PAR would be better used in the organization for career progression and staff development as well as postings process, the PAR would be better perceived" and in addition confirmed that lack of visible support by senior managers was a key obstacle to its successful use. As such a massive programme across the organization, with such key potential, it would seem that sufficient vision and commitment needs to be found to make the system work, rather than just monitor compliance with it. It is not so much the tool that is at fault, but rather the way it is being implemented, and to address that, interventions need to target the people within the organisation.

3.2. Promotions and Postings

Attitudes towards the system of promotions are connected with concerns regarding the quality of supervisors and managers. Lack of emphasis upon the need for skills and suitability to perform more senior roles in favour of such considerations as seniority and the influence of sponsors ensures that a good proportion of people made eligible for supervisory positions have little skill, experience or preparedness for these roles. A general absence of interviews and the influence of hearsay and background negotiations in the process leads to a number of theories as to how promotions are decided upon and a common belief, founded or not, that unquestioning compliance is often rewarded. This has the effect for some of discouraging them from speaking out or standing up for their point of view, for fear of earning a reputation of being difficult to work with. When staff see the names of managers with widespread reputations for staff maltreatment or poor performance on the promotions list, because, for example, they happen to fulfil a geographical quota or have been around for a long time, the level of cynicism increases.

There is a call for promotions to be linked to performance, assessment and participation in training; however, given the flaws of the performance evaluation system and the cost and complexity of assessment as is discussed further below, capacity to implement this is limited for the time being. Nonetheless, the complex system of side effects that occur in association with the system of both promotion and postings as they currently operate, highlights a need of review

and change, with a view to improve such factors as the ability to fit people with jobs and roles they are suited to and have the skills and training to perform.

3.3. Career Development

There is widespread agreement that career management and development are significantly under-resourced in the organisation. People express wishing they were able to plan their career path and then prepare themselves to achieve it, rather than randomly applying for roles out of fear of becoming a SIBA.

> "Career management is totally lacking. You never know where you are heading before you get there; you never know your path."

There is strong agreement that the organisation has a need to enhance the areas of career transition, career guidance and counselling. Training and learning opportunities need to be planned and developed strategically, with consideration as to what people are expected to have undertaken before taking up positions. Such an approach then also needs to be connected with the systems of postings and promotions, and the development component of performance review.

Along with assistance in choosing and planning a realistic path, it was suggested also that access to feedback in such areas as applications for postings and performance would be helpful. This relates to the call to professionalise many of the human resources roles in order to provide staff with the level of guidance, feedback and support that they are seeking, and which are often taken for granted in many other large organisations.

There is also a call for a greater understanding of the potential impact of a career in UNHCR upon its staff. In relation to conditions of service and some of the environments in which people work, without a taking up of the organisations responsibility to clearly assess the occupational and psychological health risks, a critical factor in staff support and career development is missing.

3.4. Assessment

There is also much talk about the need for assessment of staff before they are promoted to senior positions, and considerable work and effort has been put into evaluating the feasibility of an "assessment centre" system similar to that used by UNDP.

Similarly to the 360 degree programme, one of the biggest issues to be considered is the sustainability through cost. Each commitment to costly processes as opposed to developing internal capacity potentially creates a system that cannot be sustained in an environment of financial crisis. It is of course very important

that the organisation find, and commit to, a means for ensuring that people are being promoted to managerial and leadership positions with the skills or the potential to fulfil such roles well, in the best interests of the organisation and people of concern. Such a system needs to be linked with the development of staff and the availability of opportunities to develop the skills being assessed for.

Whatever system is introduced, the key issues are that its aims are clear, that everyone is expected to participate in it, that other related systems as discussed above, are adapted to reinforce it, and that the commitment to it is unwaveringly and courageously held to in the face of inevitable resistance.

Current Relevant Organisation-Wide Initiatives

Throughout the course of the project, the following initiatives presented as those underway at the moment that seem most likely to have some positive impact upon the priority issues identified above. Strengths and risks of these initiatives are discussed briefly below.

Executive Office
- Global Strategic Objectives

DHRM
- Workforce strategy
- Management Development
- Gender Equity Policy

CDEGEC
- Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (discussed in tandem with the gender Equity Policy above)

ODMS
- Results Based Management

DFSM
- Risk Management Pilot Project

1. Executive

1.1. Global Strategic Objectives

The most relevant objective in the most recent version[6] to the subjects covered in this paper is found within objective 6.

Global Strategic Objective 6: Strengthen UNHCR as an effective, fully engaged, responsive and respected humanitarian agency worthy of public, political and financial support with priority given to:

6.1. Maintaining financial stability by redesigning the structure of UNHCR so as streamline the organisation and reduce bureaucracy, improve decision-making and support to operations, and reduce fixed costs,

6.2. Strengthening UNHCR's partnerships and cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular with Governments, the UN, and NGOs,

6.3. Developing and maintaining an emergency preparedness and response capacity to respond to emergencies of 500,000 persons,

6.4. Undertaking comprehensive reform of UNHCR's human resource policies, in order to ensure maximum operational effectiveness, including enhanced capacity to operate in situations of insecurity, and progress in the achievement of gender equity,

6.5. Institutionalising results-based management as a fundamental performance and accountability framework for the organisation.

Priority performance targets for this objective include, of particular relevance, the following:

1. **Global Strategic Objective 6:** Establish UNHCR as an effective, fully engaged, responsive and respected humanitarian agency worthy of public, political and financial support:

By the end of 2007:

- *(6.1)* All UNHCR Field teams are active participants in UN common programming processes (CCA, UNDAF, PRSP, etc.) and utilise comprehensive assessment of needs and participatory planning with stakeholders to strengthen partnership and develop strategies that utilise the full range of resources available,

- *(6.1)* The Age, Gender, Diversity Mainstreaming Participatory Assessment Methodology is standard practice with the results of Participatory Assessments fully reflected in the design of operations, in particular for women and children. *(AfP Goal 6)*,

- *(6.3)* An integrated workforce strategy being implemented which enhances the speed and effectiveness of organizational response and better meets the needs of the organization and aspirations of staff,

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[6] UNHCR Global Strategic Objectives for 2007-2009, draft, due for finalisation April 2006

- **(6.4)** Results-based Management Framework and strategy under implementation resulting in improved strategic and operations planning, performance management and reporting,
- **(6.4)** Planning and prioritization of and within operations as well as resource allocation decisions is increasingly based on the systematic use of standards and indicators,
- **(6.4)** A comprehensive management development strategy under implementation including individual development plans and increased participation in Security Management Learning Programmes,
- **(6.5)** Percentage of unsatisfactory audits and inspections decreased and above average increased,
- **(6.5)** A comprehensive review of the design of UNHCR completed and implementation of results underway resulting in a streamlined structure, reduced bureaucracy, improved decision-making and support to operations, and improved internal management control.

The increased emphasis on such activities as planning, organisational review, bureaucracy reduction and matching workforce planning with determined needs are all critical to the development of the organisation. Given the high priority placed upon accountability on a number of levels, it still seems, however, inadequately emphasised or addressed in the objectives, as though RBM will take care of accountability in its entirety. While it may be implicit within a number of activities, it needs to be spelt out clearly in an effort to increase optimism that accountability in all its forms is being taken seriously. Along with accountability structures and systems, there is a need for strategies that address the lack of a "culture of accountability", that is, attitudes, beliefs and confidence that problems will be addressed promptly and firmly.

2. DHRM

2.1. Workforce Strategy

At the time of writing, a lot of hope in the organization rests on the success of both the Results-Based Management and the DHRM workforce strategies. Perhaps so much hope as to raise concern that expectations may exceed what the two managers responsible can realistically achieve. Bearing this in mind, it is worth referring again to the findings and sentiments of the UN integrity survey, which highlights the important role of human resources, but warns against investing too much emphasis on its ability to cure all ills. In a similar approach to the mainstreaming strategy for gender equality with regard to persons of concerns, the survey report emphasizes the organization wide responsibility of all management and staff for addressing the core issues of concern.

"Any system women and men can create, men and women can corrupt. And to the extent that failings in HR practices have been identified as predictive of unfavourable perceptions of organizational integrity, the remedies are related to improving the accountability of leaders, managers and staff, not necessarily OHRM."

Overall the forthcoming workforce strategy appears to respond on one level, pragmatically and probably rightly so, to the reluctance of the organisation to tackle its problems in a visionary and global way. Policies and strategies will be passed piece by piece, attempting to run the gauntlet of systems, processes and obstacles to change, but with the risk that the overall vision becomes fragmented and the links between initiatives become disrupted. Nonetheless, with strong "political will" from the most senior levels, sufficient allocation of resources with an understanding of the potential longer term gains and efficiencies, and the right mix between consultation and authoritative drive to make things happen, a number of the recurring concerns discussed above may well begin to be addressed creatively.

Some of the expressed goals and vision behind the strategy, which has yet to reach the point of public distribution and wider consultation at the point of writing, relating positively to the culture of the organization include;

- Identification of the need to offer staff more in terms of support services and processes for performance and career development, as well as career transition
- Strategic learning and assessment processes to link with career development and management development and selection
- The determination that 360 degree feedback will "start from the top"
- The need to link with RBM in lifting the clarity and performance of the PAR and to reduce the adversarial nature of the process
- A belief that qualitative compliance with the PAR needs to be an emphasis ahead of quantitative compliance
- Stronger service orientated links between staff and human resources officers with an emphasis on career development assistance
- An interest in finding ways of opening up recruitment sufficiently to tackle the "closed shop" nature of the organization, that tends to strengthen and reinforce many more problematic aspects of the culture.
- A valuing of staff commitment and loyalty, with a desire to maintain that whilst also seeking more flexible options that respond to the operational needs of the organisation

An additional element for consideration, in response to the widespread concern regarding the contested performance reviews and the difficulty in managing poor performance, is the capacity of human resources to provide expertise and

guidance in industrial relations issues, as mentioned above. The aim would be to ensure that processes involving contentious performance reviews and performance management are carried out fairly and with the interests of all parties in mind, adhering to the rules and regulations of the UN system, whilst handling difficult situations carefully and sensitively. Managers consistently expressed feeling "on their own" with such issues, and as a result, reluctant to follow through when to do so may cause considerable stress and divert time from many other pressing issues. Access to advice both in practical terms with respect to rules and process, and in more of a coaching sense in handling the interpersonal issues could encourage managers to take up their responsibilities more fully in this area and would contribute to an increase in skill level.

2.2. Management Development

The newly redeveloped Management Learning Programme has been underway since around early 2005 and continues to be expanded and reviewed. Additionally, planning is being undertaken for a specialised programme for senior managers, the Strategic Leadership Learning Programme. Learning from past experience of low levels of engagement of senior managers in learning programmes, a comprehensive learning needs analysis will be undertaken to understand the unique requirements and demands of the senior management role. The plan is to develop a more tailored and diverse approach that may incorporate the use of learning coaches and individualised development plans.

The vision includes linking various initiatives with the potential, if taken up and reinforced successfully, to reduce fragmentation and improve the efficacy of each component. For example, this might look as following:

- 360 degree exercise
- Leading to the development of an Individual Learning Plan.
- Implementation of the learning plan could be supported by a coach and may include units of the MLP or the Strategic Management Learning Programme but may not be restricted to these
- Once completed a further 360 degree exercise might enable review of progress made
- And / or some form of assessment / testing / interviews
- Leading to eligibility for candidature for promotion

As per a recent all staff announcement, the "360 degree feedback" tool is being introduced to the senior management committee shortly, with mandatory compliance. It has been used for some time through the management learning programmes to relatively high acclaim. Handled well, the 360 degree process can

be an extremely powerful and useful tool, and the public preparedness of the SMC to participate and set the standard has the potential to be a tremendously positive and symbolic act. There is a great deal of interest in the concept across the organization, as people hope it might help managers improve their skills as managers and allow staff the opportunity to participate in the process. Its wider introduction should not be delayed too long lest people lose faith that there is real commitment to doing things differently.

Some considerations with regard to the 360 include;
- That its use should be sustainable financially, which might need to involve training people internally to administer it well, so that it is not subject to some future budget cuts
- That its position in relation to the PAR should be clear. In the minds of many, it is seen as an alternative or a solution to the problematic PAR. Currently the intention is only to use it as a development and not an assessment tool, and therefore it will not relate to the PAR.
- Safeguards need to be in place to ensure that the tool is never used as a means to punish people in a destructive manner. Given what is already known about some of the more negative dynamics of the organisation, it is not too difficult to imagine that the enthusiasm of many people for the system may be in part fuelled by the idea that some unpopular people might finally get their "just deserts". So far the people who have used the method are those who have self selected to the learning programmes, and therefore, one might assume, are more willing to receive feedback and be enthusiastic to learn from it. The impact of using this tool with unwilling participants, who may potentially receive strong feedback, needs to be considered and handled well, including the importance of skill in those administering it.

The links with the PAR and results based management requirements need also to be incorporated into the senior learning initiative in order to bring further cohesion and congruence to organizational processes, but this idea presents as potentially sustainable, positive in its focus and sufficiently rigorous to support real overall development of skill levels. It is also worth considering the possibility of utilizing expertise and talent within the organization for coaching purposes. After the initial investment of time and human resources in setting such a system up, it could prove to be a highly cost efficient means for supporting the development of upcoming managers.

Further connections and links need to be established between these initiatives, the RBM process and other initiatives such as the new Protection Management Learning Programme, currently in development.

2.3. Gender Equity (and Equality)

Any initiatives aimed at redressing the years of discrimination towards and barriers against women achieving a more equitable distribution among the senior levels invite resistance and even backlash. As stated in the original report, women are easy and regular targets for the disappointment of men who feel their careers have been impeded in some way when they see women promoted above them. As the High Commissioner ironically quipped recently in a public forum, true equity may only be achieved when incompetent women are promoted as regularly as incompetent men. While in general people complain broadly about the skill levels of managers, it seems that individual women are more often singled out for critique and tend to measured against much higher standards, whereas the large numbers of less competent men remain somewhat more anonymous. Given the current overall standard of management skill across the organisation, it seems unrealistic to expect women to be flawless managers before they may be promoted without rancour from those who missed out when the same expectation is not made of their male colleagues.

The dilemma continues for an organisation endeavouring to mainstream awareness of age, gender and diversity across all operations and functions, when it so clearly cannot redress gender inequity within its own ranks. The issue of women not wanting to go to non-family duty stations is regularly raised as the reason for so few women at a senior level. Without absolute empirical evidence regarding this, we just simply don't know. Given that most other organisations in the world don't have the problem of non-family duty stations and yet still under represent women at senior levels, the answer may lie more in the fact that UNHCR is like everywhere else in that it establishes systems, often operating outside of awareness, that continue to make it more difficult for women to advance. A recent draft paper reiterates a call for research involving retrospective exit interviews with departed women staff. In addition to seeking the views of current women staff through something like a survey, this may serve to finally answer this question, and allow more informed decisions to be made about the position of women in the organisation.

At the time of writing, a draft gender equity policy is in existence, however it may be some time before it is finalised and agreement is reached on what may be controversial measures. It is important that there are strong links between gender equity initiatives in the human resources arena and the gender equality initiatives being co-ordinated through the Community Development, Education, Gender Equality and Children Section with regard to women and men of concern. Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) calls for all actions undertaken by UNHCR, including the drafting of policies, manuals, guidelines, publications, annual protection reports, protection strategies, legislation,

guidelines, projects submissions, country operation plans, training, project activities and budget allocation, include analysis of the impact on women, girls, men and boys of diverse backgrounds. The analysis will enable programmes to be designed in such a manner as to address discrimination and inequalities and ensure equity in outcomes.

The AGDM initiative has an ambitious, transformative agenda that aims to change organisation culture and improve ways of working that will have spin off effects in such areas as the quality of analysis, planning and accountability, through the use of strategies such as:

- The establishment of multi-functional teams under the leadership of the representative that include balanced representation across gender, roles, and implementing partners.
- Regular and annual participatory assessments with women, girls, boys and men of concern. Assessment findings analysed from an age, gender and diversity perspective to consider the overall impact of any programming action. The analysis is then used for strategic planning, determining protection objectives and formulating programmes, allocating budgets at the project submission and country operations plan stage.
- Ensuring that women as well as men influence all stages of planning and programmes, including through equal participation in decision-making
- The routine use of sex disaggregated data (quantitative) and gender analytical information (qualitative) in order to: identify gender difference and inequality; heighten understanding of the need for gender awareness; ensure policies and programmes address the needs of both women and men; monitor the differential impact of policy, project and budget commitments on females and males.
- Organizational capacity building and change, recognizing that humanitarian actors must "practice what they preach" and ensure that UNHCR has the skills and resources to achieve goals of gender equality.

Taken up well, these strategies should influence awareness and thinking internally as well as with regard to people of concern. A current strategy paper promoting action on gender equality within the organisation suggests a "top ten" list of initiatives, a number of which are congruent with the spirit of the mainstreaming strategy. In summary, the paper recommends:
1. Adopting a gender equity policy
2. Integrating a gender equality perspective into all the Global Strategic Objectives, RBM and the CMS, very much along the lines of the "mainstreaming" approach
3. Gender awareness training for the SMC

4. Consolidation of gender initiatives to ensure congruence and coherence, such as AGDM and the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project
5. Changes to the APPB Procedural Guidelines related to gender equality
6. Mentoring and activities to increase the visibility of women's management and leadership competence
7. Making the Management Learning Programme obligatory for all managers and ensuring gender components of the training
8. A gender audit of all activities at HQ and in the field
9. Introduction of gender budgeting
10. Research to investigate strategies for retention of female staff that fit with the needs of the organisation.

3. ODMS

3.1. Results Based Management

The organization is currently investing resources into the wider implementation of its results based management strategy (RBM). According to the Organisation Development and Management Section:

"RBM is a management philosophy and approach that emphasizes the achievement of results- the impact to be achieved as the essential task of management. RBM helps ensure that all organisational processes support the achievement of the right results in an as effective and efficient a manner as is possible. RBM involves, at a minimum, four key steps:

1. Defining strategic goals that provide a focus for action;
2. Specifying the expected results that contribute to these goals and aligning programmes, processes, people and resources behind them;
3. Engaging in ongoing monitoring and performance/ impact assessment using standards and indicators, and integrating lessons learned into future planning; and,
4. Ensuring accountability of individuals, teams and partners based on continuous feedback to improve performance."

As the key elements of RBM involve planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, delegation of authority and accountability, and staff performance management processes, there is considerable potential for the strategy to pick up on a number of the key problem areas for UNHCR. The recent paper, "Results-Based Management Gap Analysis", identified that efforts to institutionalise Results-Based Management must cut across the organisation and will rely upon three particular factors:

1. Understanding and commitment of Executive and Senior Management to provide leadership;

2. Recognition that RBM involves all aspects of UNHCR management in an integrated and comprehensive approach requiring a multi-year effort that should evolve on the basis of monitoring of progress and lessons learned and applied;
3. Recognition that UNHCR needs to shape its approach to RBM based on the unique needs and characteristics of the organisation.

By creating a greater emphasis on achievement of results, monitoring of progress and performance, there is much scope to positively influence organisation culture through renewing focus in a coordinated manner upon the core task of the organisation, with an increased accountability, and in time, if successful, improved morale.

Picking up on two themes that have presented as core to this report, accountability and performance management, the RBM gap analysis makes specific recommendations that UNHCR undertake the following specific measures:

Accountability
- Review its organisational design and structure to provide a coherent structure in which accountability relationships are clarified particularly with respect to support, control and oversight;
- Review its accountability mechanisms and develop an accountability framework which describes the accountability system within the organisation and strengthens the organisation's capacity to deal with poor performance;
- Simplify and strengthen delegation of authority by making the Country Operations Plan the basis for delegation of authority, in effect one Letter of Instruction per country based on the COP.

Performance Management
- Prioritise the improvement of its performance management system and develop a long-term strategy for its improvement drawing on the range of initiatives underway and new initiatives that may be required;
- Clearly articulate criteria for good performance as well as promote effective teamwork as the key means for achieving positive results;
- Develop more effective ways to address poor performance at all levels in the organization;
- Ensure that a closer link will be established between training initiatives and the strategic priorities of the organization.

Overall it identifies the following areas as of priority areas for implementation:
1) Development of a RBM Framework for UNHCR;
2) Strategic Planning;

3) Accountability Framework;
4) Performance Management;
5) Policy Development.

This paper reiterates the importance of the issues outlined above, and would argue in the main there are close correlations with the findings here.

The notion of reviewing overall organisation design and structure is an ambitious but worthy goal and has been taken up at the executive level as reflected in the most recent global strategic objectives document. Carrying this out at any time in the near to medium term is complicated by the current DIP/DOS restructure, which is being undertaken with different aims and agendas in mind. In expending much energy and time in restructuring just a portion of the organisation, the opportunity to rethink and redesign UNHCR overall to most effectively respond to the current operational needs may be delayed further, despite the fact that the working group for the restructure themselves concluded there is need for a more comprehensive review of the headquarters structure with a rationalizing, streamlining and regrouping of HQ services. Given the current problematic financial situation along with the organisation's organic and seemingly unplanned or coordinated growth over the past decade or more, it certainly would make sense to rethink the whole sooner rather than later, and aim for a more efficient, strategic and integrated organisation.

In another current initiative being implemented at the moment as part of the effort to institutionalise Results-Based Management, and in particular strengthen strategic planning within UNHCR, all Headquarters Bureaux and Divisions will develop multi-year strategic plans beginning in 2007, as mentioned earlier. These plans will be required to link with the strategic priorities as identified in the UNHCR Corporate Strategic Plan for 2007-2009[7]. The formulation and updating of these multi-year plans will be timed to enable them to coordinate with operations planning in the Field and at Headquarters. These plans will include the following elements:
- Situational/ Context Analysis and its implications for the specific area of responsibility covered in the plan
- Strategic Objectives for the Bureau / Department / Division and their linkages to the Global Strategic Objectives
- Risk and Opportunities Analysis
- Strategies for Achieving Objectives, Management and Organisational Development priorities and strategies

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7 The corporate strategic plan, which will be completed by end April 2006, will place the global strategic objectives into a broader context. The strategic plan will include analysis of UNHCR's working environment, risks and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses.

- Resource Implications.

The more coordinated and thoughtful processes become, the more professionally planning and development of activities are undertaken, the more accountable each section is for the work they do, the implications should filter through to influence the organization's culture, effectiveness and self and external image. This is not guaranteed unless it is done well and backed by adequate leadership and many of the other elements discussed thus far, however, this is clearly a positive move. A challenge will be that it is not seen as just "yet more paperwork".

The RBM gap analysis emphasises the process must integrate all facets of management. In a highly concerted effort to achieve operational and financial goals, it should be stressed that emphasis upon the development of effective people and team management skills should not be lost. As was commented, "It is a framework and means for doing it better but it doesn't provide the solutions." As with the PAR, RBM is a tool, which if used and implemented well and with consistency, has the potential to assist in moving the organisation forward, but critical still are the people who use it and the priorities reflected in "results". Unfortunately there are few easy solutions to the question of interpersonal and team management skills; these need to be tackled at a number of different levels and the temptation with RBM may be to avoid these kinds of issues and focus only on more concrete and attainable targets.

4. DFSM

4.1. Risk Management Pilot Project

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is currently working with UNHCR under a pro bono agreement related to the Tsunami assistance programme. UNHCR decided to use the hours allocated to it in the development of a risk management framework specific to the needs of UNHCR, an idea that has been taken up enthusiastically by a number of other UN organisations. Through individual interviews with senior management and multi-disciplinary workshops, this project has generated a risk inventory and risk management framework through rating exercises that assessed the impact and probability of 26 UNHCR-specific institutional risks. Using PwC risk analysis methodology and assistance, an internal focus group is working with a number of departments to develop this exercise further to analyze the issues, come up with solutions, define accountabilities and identify monitoring processes. It is planned that two pilot implementations will be undertaken to be monitored by PwC with a view to refining the organization's risk profile and to determine considerations for wider

implementation of the framework. There is an awareness of the need to incorporate other relevant management initiatives, including the further institutionalization of RBM.

Many of the key "risks" identified through the process are a reiteration of the problems with which everyone is familiar and that come up repeatedly as ongoing problems the organization has so far not solved. For example, in general order of perceived severity (and some are paraphrased here for clarity);

- Containment of spending
- Insufficient controls
- Inadequate performance management system
- Culture of non-accountability
- Instability of funding
- Ethical misconduct and fraud
- Weaknesses in supplies and logistics planning and delivery of emergency operations
- Poor management information and reporting
- Lack of clearly articulated priorities
- Lack of succession planning
- Lack of competency management
- Cumbersome HR rules and procedures
- Poor communication of new strategic vision

In many ways the risk management approach is one of many possible methodologies for identifying key issues and problems within an organization and working towards solving them. The enterprising use of the donated hours is to be applauded and if the approach can be supported, institutionalized and sustained, and senior commitment is forthcoming to its implementation, it can only be a positive exercise; one that draws upon the expertise and creativity of staff and requires that these ongoing problems be tackled.

The current vision for the project is to augment current processes, for example, the Country Operations Plans, to assist with more effective and informed analysis and planning, creating a higher level of accountability for outcomes. The framework therefore has the potential to link well to other relevant projects such as RBM and to the Age Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming. It has yet to find clear stewardship and is still very much operating in a limited arena at the pilot phase, but with some positive results so far and a degree of enthusiasm from those working with it.

Conclusions

The list of recommendations as to what could be done differently could be very long and overwhelming. This project has attempted to identify a manageable number of key strategic and practical interventions that might realistically be achieved in the short to medium term and that have the potential to begin to impact upon the organization's culture in a meaningful way. It should be acknowledged that much more could and should be done over time, and that therefore this is by no means a comprehensive recommendations list. Actions that are already underway, and that are discussed above, are not all mentioned again in detail to avoid repetition, other than to support their implementation and to stress the critical need for support and will to follow them through.

When casual conversations about what might be done differently are regularly met with cynical interjections along the lines of "yes, but 'they' won't do anything", one could throw one's hands up in despair, or alternatively summarize the recommendations simply by borrowing the following passage from the integrity survey;

> **The Big Picture: What Is Important**
> "Staff care most about what they "see" others doing and saying. Organizational Integrity [and therefore a more positive culture, higher morale, higher productivity and efficiency] is about: eliminating discrepancies in what leaders and supervisors say and do; living the UN's vision, mission and values while limiting political and cultural influences; doing the right things even when it's inconvenient, uncomfortable or without precedent; demonstrating the value of integrity by rewarding those who do while disciplining those who do not.

The majority of interventions recommended are developed with the following underlying aims and messages:
- Visibility, commitment, communication and transparency of and by senior management are absolutely key to the transformation of the organisation culture and improvement of organisation climate and performance over time.
- Much can and should be done without significant cost to the organisation, utilizing the skills and expertise amongst staff. As is quoted above, limiting the influence of "politics", doing the right thing even when it is difficult, following through with systems already in place, in addition to taking into account cultural aspects of the organisation that get in the way of progress, involve action, commitment and will rather than expense.
- Having said this, however, it should be noted that there is a connection between cultural barriers within the organisation and problems with

managing, monitoring and optimizing funds. It is not with the parameters of this project to give specific or expert recommendations as to how financial problems might be solved, other than to emphasize that the solution to financial problems does not only rest in finding more money. Rather, the way the organisation operates is currently financially inefficient and strategies to resolve this must tackle cultural elements in order to succeed.

Strategic and Practical Interventions

10. The findings here suggest that UNHCR would benefit from regular communication with all staff both in the field and at headquarters from senior leadership, including information sharing and well-conducted discussion forums. Through these avenues and on a day to day basis, there needs to be strong, courageous and visible support and backup for both the workforce management strategy and RBM. For example:
    - All-staff forums held quarterly in the atrium, utilizing the current format of inviting questions from the field and opening the floor for discussion.
    - In addition to a presentation by the High Commissioner, it is suggested that rotating themes be introduced so that other troika and SMC members may discuss and present issues related to their areas, increase their visibility and contact with staff.
    - Rather than the current ad hoc basis, regularize "brown bag lunches" and opportunities to hear more about new initiatives and directions that will affect the organisation, recording proceedings and disseminating to the field.
    - In an effort to build stronger links across the organisation, between the field, headquarters and senior leaders, opportunities presented by visiting representatives and senior field-based staff should be capitalized upon by inviting them to present country or regional "updates" in a Q&A format at headquarters, inviting all staff, and again making these available to the field.
    - As these activities clearly favour headquarters based staff, practices such as distributing proceedings of meetings to all staff, and the invitations to field staff to submit questions and issues need to be routine.

11. In the spirit of leading by example, this report supports and encourages the participation of the SMC in the 360-degree project. While the outcomes of the process should remain confidential, their experience of it should be shared with staff to encourage discussion and increased commitment.

12. Clarify and improve the role and function of the SMC in the areas of strategic planning, policy development and management, decision-making, authority

and maintaining a global perspective on the organisation, and communicate this to staff.

- This should be done through an active development process that involves members of the SMC determining and agreeing upon the direction of the committee within parameters set by the High Commissioner.

13. Accountability on its many levels may well be improved in part through the RBM strategy, and this report supports the RBM gap analysis recommendations regarding both accountability and performance management as reproduced above, along with the new strategic planning structures. These are processes that will take time to have widespread impact and the outcomes may take longer to be evident across the organization and to embed themselves in staff awareness. In the meantime, senior management needs to talk about accountability regularly and publicly, and where the newer initiatives fit into the wider picture. While public examples should not be made of individuals, there does need to be a much clearer sense that it is taken seriously and that action is taken effectively. This could be achieved through all-staff forums as suggested above, through e-mail communication, regular discussion in staff meetings.

14. In addition, as per the recommendation of the RBM gap analysis, the performance review system needs to be improved, and not through a time consuming redesign of the system, but by addressing the human barriers to its effective implementation. This would include:
- Ensuring that all supervisors have access to learning activities that assist them in developing the skills and confidence to carry out effective performance reviews. This should be included as part of any strategic planning for training and learning within the organisation.
- Prioritization of qualitative rather than quantitative compliance, with active follow up to encourage dialogue and learning
- Promotion of support services available through human resources to provide coaching and advice to supervisors undertaking performance reviews. This may require additional training of a select number of staff to ensure the skills and expertise exist within the organisation, and then require them to actively make contact with supervisors rather than wait for people to find and contact them.
- This should also involve the conversion of a small group of human resource posts to positions with expertise in UN industrial relations and performance management guidance. In order to address the needs of senior managers with regard to managing performance, there needs to be access to advisors with sufficient seniority and authority for the system to work effectively. There should be no reason why this could not be done

within the existing staffing profile and not incur significant additional cost.

- Regular communication between performance management support in DHRM and supervisors, with updates, information, and for example, case examples, perhaps in the form of a newsletter, to maintain awareness and development.
- Wide consultation should be undertaken across the organisation to determine any small and practical adjustments that may need to be made to the PAR to assist in its more efficient utilization. This would also engage people further in the process and raise awareness of the tool and commitment to its use. This could be undertaken either as a DHRM or an RBM initiative, or ideally as a collaboration between the two.
- A high profile campaign should be conducted to raise awareness of the organization's expectations regarding the management of poor performance. It seems that tools exist, for example, in the form of guidelines for managers, and additional strategies may need to be developed, drawing upon expertise existing within the organisation. The guidelines need to be activated assertively to ensure their implementation. The model currently being used to promote the Code of Conduct could be adapted for a performance management improvement strategy, with the engagement of senior staff, the widespread use of discussion forums, and the recruitment of a network of competent staff as facilitators.

15. Bearing in mind the pressing financial position of the organization, it is recognized that unlimited resources are not available for improvement initiatives. Some weighing up needs to be done, however, of short vs. longer-term costs and benefits of any particular initiatives. The cost of things remaining as they are needs to be considered.
    - Rationalization and prioritization of resources and finances should occur at some point before a crisis forces it to happen, and through ideas existing in the organization such as the organization redesign discussed above, would likely realize further funds for improvement initiatives.
    - Achievements need to be visible in a timely manner. Some current projects and proposals, such as the 360-degree programme and indeed much of the workforce management strategy, need to be progressed in a timely way in order to demonstrate commitment to achieving an outcome and some real change. This might mean utilizing existing human resources within the organization for time limited periods to augment the current capacity of responsible units.
    - In a similar vein, early achievements of the risk management exercise needs to promoted widely, demonstrating some timely, transferable and sustainable results in order to demonstrate its value and to create and sustain momentum for its implementation.

16. In recognition that the achievement of a more positive and skilled management workforce is one of the single most powerful improvements the organization can make overall, this report cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for high level support for the development and institutionalization of a multifaceted management development approach along the lines of that outlined above, moving away from the reliance upon learning programmes alone.

17. Across the board there is a need to view things in terms of a wider perspective, how things relate to each other and how coordination of functions and resources would make this a more efficient organization in many ways, including financially. For example, there needs to be some determination to link the currently disparate processes of performance review, 360 degree feedback, assessment, promotions and postings, management development, coaching, RBM. One method of working towards this could include:
    - Develop cross cutting tasks for SMC members that will achieve concrete goals for the organization, improve cohesion within the SMC and highlight global needs and issues for the organization. In addition to an aim of increasing avenues for staff participation in the development and refinement of strategies, a practical approach could be to establish consultative working groups. Some of the key issues raised here could be taken on by time limited working groups that are given clear terms of reference, are headed by members of the SMC, but contain staff from a range of interest areas. These groups should be given appropriate authority and tasked with finding actionable solutions to defined problems, that will guide the organization through many of its cultural barriers and aim to bring greater linkages and coordination across and between areas and functions. Some key questions to answer include;
        o Do we have the will to make learning and development prerequisites for taking on particular roles and promotions?
        o What gets in the way of linking promotions to performance and learning, and how can we remove those obstacles?
        o How do we address the human barriers to the effective implementation of the PAR and develop solutions that can be sufficiently and practically resourced? How else might the organization effectively address poor performance in a manner that is acceptable to both management and staff?
        o How might the organization most effectively utilize the talent is has within its ranks to support and guide the development of managers and leaders through such means as coaching and mentoring?

- The use of such working groups would utilize expertise from within the organization, reduce costs involved in external consultancies, encourage involvement from across the organization in both the finding of solutions and their implementation, access unique solutions that may not otherwise be found, and demonstrate commitment from senior management to consultation and communication. These groups would have to set up in a way that was different from past experience, so that they do not get bogged down in process, conflict and despair that anything will change.

18. The work currently being done to achieve gender equity in the organisation needs not only stated support from senior levels, but also requires practical strategies to back this up and ensure that progress is made, overcoming the cultural barriers that stand in the way:
    - The gender equity policy needs to be developed more fully, with sufficient resources allocated to get this task done promptly and to a point where it can be implemented.
    - Gender equity work should not only be seen to be done by a small band of committed women. Whenever strategies are implemented to redress the imbalances for women, many male staff experience a sense of injustice and a backlash occurs. Men must be involved in identifying the problems and in coming up with the solutions in order for there to be commitment and a chance of real success. Given that each time an event occurs on the topic of gender issues, only a small handful of men voluntarily attend, it is evident that a targeted strategy needs to be implemented to specifically invite or require that sufficient numbers of men engage and participate in any solution oriented processes.
    - The question of women staff and what actually prevents them from progressing in the same numbers should be answered to allow mythology to be replaced by knowledge. This should involve carrying out the exit interviews as planned, and incorporate a survey of current women staff. This would require the commitment of resources to undertake it successfully, but may well be achievable as a time limited project utilizing a staff member in between assignments.

Barb Wigley, 2006