

Measure for measure:
a field-based snapshot of the implementation
of results based management in UNHCR

Initial management response

December 2010

In November 2010, UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service published a report titled 'Measure for measure: a field-based snapshot of the implementation of results based management in UNHCR'. The review was commissioned by the Deputy High Commissioner, led by an independent consultant and supported by a multi-functional team of UNHCR staff members.

The report found that significant progress has been made with respect to the introduction of results-based management (RBM), programming and budgeting in UNHCR. The organization's personnel have developed a heightened awareness and understanding of these approaches and are striving to make full and effective use of the new tools and mechanisms that have been placed at their disposal. The introduction of RBM has also reinforced UNHCR's credibility with states and other stakeholders.

Notwithstanding these positive findings, the report also identifies a number of issues which require further attention, so that RBM's potential for UNHCR can be more fully realized in UNHCR. This note provides a summary of the initial actions that are being or will be undertaken to address the main findings and recommendations of the report.

Culture, communication and training

The report observes that while steady progress is being made in fostering an 'RBM culture' in UNHCR, additional efforts are needed to communicate the rationale for, the objectives of and the advantages to be gained from RBM. Such efforts should address staff members at every level of the organization and in all of its different functions.

They should also stress the role that RBM has to play in the effective and efficient delivery of UNHCR's mandate, countering the current perception that RBM is primarily a matter of compliance with planning and budgeting systems and the introduction of new information technology. The report finds that significant efforts were made to train UNHCR staff in the different elements and tools of results based management, but the technical problems associated with the roll-out of the new Focus software tended to overshadow the underlying purpose of RBM.

A recent review of the detailed operational plans submitted for 2011 shows that continued progress is being made with respect to the communication and understanding of RBM purposes and principles in UNHCR. At the same time, the review has provided further insight into the gaps that need to be filled.

To address those gaps, workshops have been held with selected field operations to discuss the ongoing implementation of RBM. Action is also being taken at Headquarters to meet concerns expressed by the field in relation to the simplification, consolidation and fine-tuning of UNHCR's approach to RBM.

There are repeated calls for more training on the various elements of RBM. To meet that demand, RBM has been included in additional training programmes, including the induction training provided to new staff members, the induction training provided to newly-appointed UNHCR Representatives, as well as a number of e-

learning programmes related to operations management. RBM will be incorporated in other and existing training initiatives, such as the Protection Learning Programme, while easily accessible guidance materials will be produced on RBM and the tools that support it.

In the first and second quarters of 2011, training will be provided to multifunctional teams in the field, capacitating them to monitor and report on 2011 results and to prepare results-based plans for 2012-2013 plans. The detailed planning and prioritization of such training, as well as the role to be played in it by UNHCR regional offices and hubs, is currently under discussion with the Regional Bureaux. To the extent possible, targeted training will be provided to meet the specific needs of different UNHCR offices and staff members.

In addition to these training and learning initiatives, steps are being taken to address the snapshot report's call for a more effective, creative and stimulating approach to RBM-related communications and information-sharing. These will include the preparation of:

- a concise and accessible 'mission statement' on RBM and its relationship to UNHCR's mandate, for dissemination to the organization's staff members and partners;
- more detailed and supporting information notes on the various components of RBM covered in the snapshot report, demonstrating how they fit together and are mutually reinforcing;
- regular updates to field operations, so as to ensure that all offices are kept informed about RBM-related developments, including feedback on relevant workshops; and,
- reports on effective practices and lessons-learned in relation to the implementation of RBM, with special reference to the way Focus can be used as an analytical, communications and external relations tool.

Global Strategic Priorities and the Results Framework

The snapshot report indicates that the Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs) are regarded as a useful checklist of UNHCR's key activities, but that they are not necessarily informing the prioritization and resource allocation process at field level. The following steps will be taken in relation to this issue.

First, UNHCR will strive to establish a more manageable set of GSPs for the 2012-2013 programme cycle, as well as full alignment with the Results Framework.

Second, the organization will endeavour to strengthen and broaden ownership of the GSPs and Results Framework, especially amongst UNHCR Representatives and the field operations they manage. More specifically, the forthcoming (February 2011) Global Representatives Meeting will be used to review the draft set of GSPs and corresponding targets for 2012-2013 and to agree on the contribution of field operations to the GSPs.

Third, while maintaining the structure of the Results Framework, it will be further streamlined for the 2012-2013 programme cycle, sharpening the indicators where required. The outcome of various workshops involving field-based staff will feed into that revision process.

Programming cycle and Focus functionality

The experience of two annual programming cycles demonstrates that further streamlining and simplification of the cycle could be pursued without undermining the basic approach that UNHCR has adopted in the context of RBM implementation. The 2012-2013 programming cycle will be based on a 'one plan' principle, thereby addressing the main concerns captured in the snapshot report, including the protracted nature of the current planning cycle, the multitude of plans to be produced and maintained in Focus, as well as the disproportionate emphasis that appears to be placed on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), leaving limited time to work on the 'prioritized plan'.

Under the revised approach, the planning process will start with the comprehensive assessment of needs and continue with development of a prioritized plan as a subset of the CNA. This will also allow the annual review process to take into account both the priority needs and the corresponding plan to address them within projected resources, and to clearly identify any additional unmet needs within the comprehensive plan.

To address another concern expressed in the snapshot report, UNHCR will continue its efforts to ensure that Focus is more user-friendly, its functionality strengthened and its interface with MSRP improved continuously. In relation to Focus, particular attention will be given to (a) allowing a comprehensive view of the various elements of the plan; (b) improved indicator management; (c) automated budget upload to MSRP, triggered by the user; and (d) significant simplification of the staff apportioning method.