

**3rd meeting**

**PROJECT DELPHI**

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. At the annual session of the Executive Committee in October 1995, the High Commissioner made a commitment to restructure the way in which UNHCR worked, so as to improve the delivery, accountability and performance of the Office, and build the capacity to contract and expand in response to operational demands. She also set out a goal for UNHCR of becoming a slimmer, trimmer organization, committed to protection, responsive to operational needs and aggressive in the search for solutions.

2. The framework for planning and effecting these changes in UNHCR was named Project Delphi. In a directive to all staff on 4 December 1995, the High Commissioner announced Project Delphi and described the way in which it would be managed. She appointed a steering committee for Project Delphi to be known as the Change Management Group (CMG). This Group was made up of UNHCR staff with wide-ranging Headquarters and field experience; they were assisted by a part-time consultant. The broad mandate of the CMG was to undertake a comprehensive examination of how UNHCR conducted its business. In particular it was to examine the processes by which UNHCR functioned, to review and coordinate existing and planned change initiatives, to manage the analysis and redesign of identified processes, to quantify the objectives and to plan their implementation. The areas targeted for review included: how policy is formulated and promulgated; human resources issues; programming; finance and funding; logistics; and the need for improved technological infrastructure to support UNHCR's processes.

3. In undertaking this comprehensive examination, the CMG mobilized and utilized the input of the whole organization, both at Headquarters and in the field. To facilitate its work, the CMG established three "focus groups" which looked into issues related to "Operations", "People" and "Money". In order to achieve as broad a participation as possible, staff in all categories, at UNHCR locations worldwide, were invited to participate by submitting their observations and recommendations about UNHCR processes to the CMG. The High Commissioner asked the CMG to submit its first comprehensive written report by the end of April 1996; this report was to include recommendations on how to proceed thereafter. The Deputy High Commissioner was tasked to follow closely the work of the Change Management Group and to ensure continuous senior management support.

**II. THE REPORT OF THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT GROUP**

4. The Final Report of the Change Management Group of Project Delphi (CMG Report) was presented to the High Commissioner on 1 May 1996; its recommendations are drawn from the work of the three focus groups, namely on "Operations", "People" and "Money", which, in turn, take account of the contributions submitted by some one hundred UNHCR locations. In a memorandum to all staff on 10 May 1996, the High Commissioner expressed her appreciation of the CMG Report and the work of the CMG. Referring to the Report's own statement that it contained "only a broad conceptual framework of the change that UNHCR will need..", she emphasized that it did represent a critical advance in UNHCR's quest to improve its performance.

5. The CMG Report was also presented to the Senior Management Committee of UNHCR on 3 May 1996; the Senior Management Committee commenced its substantive review of the CMG Report at its meeting of 15 May 1996. This initial step in the review process of the CMG Report focused on the basis for the Change Management Group's work - the principles, values, objectives and assumptions - and the overall recommendations of the Report.

#### ***A. Objectives of Project Delphi***

6. Guided by the mission of the Office and the brief it had received from the High Commissioner, the Change Management Group had established, *inter alia*, a number of objectives for its work. These objectives were:

1. To devise clearer policy formulation and decision-making processes
2. To move operational decision-making closer to the point of delivery
3. To design means to contract and expand according to operational needs
4. To maximize interoperability with major partners, particularly within the United Nations
5. To eliminate duplication and overlaps
6. To become more effective and efficient
7. To put the right resources in the right place at the right time
8. To enable staff to use their full potential and empower managers to manage
9. To reward on merit and sanction where necessary
10. To exploit technological potential and allow wide and timely access to information

#### ***B. Overall recommendations***

7. The CMG Report made the following overall recommendations:

- **The approach to any particular operation will be based on a refugee problem, existing or potential ( a "situation" approach).** Any operation, in this sense, will encompass at least two countries - the country of origin and country/ies of asylum. This comprehensive approach will apply to programme formulation, prioritization and allocation of resources.
- **Authority will be delegated to the appropriate level, and as close as possible to the point of delivery.** This change will apply to the full cycle of programme management as well as to the management of human and financial resources. Delegation of authority will be accompanied by full accountability and integrated control and evaluation mechanisms.
- **Accountability of operation managers will be supported by clear policy**

**making and dissemination processes.** Policy will be fully informed and well communicated, to be understood and capable of enforcement. Mechanisms will be put in place, or strengthened, whereby issues may be raised from the field to higher policy-making levels, and policy guidance will be disseminated back to the field.

- **Recruitment, posting and separation policies will be guided by the needs of the organization and its beneficiaries, and determined by performance.** This proposal endorses the objectives and philosophy of Career Management Strategy, particularly with regard to performance appraisal and staff development.

8. The Senior Management Committee of UNHCR, in reviewing the CMG Report recalled that the work of Project Delphi took as its starting point and basis the Mandate that has been entrusted to UNHCR by the international community. The focus of Project Delphi and the Change Management Group was the management processes used by UNHCR to provide international protection and to search for solutions to the problems of refugees and others of concern to the Office.

9. In considering the overall recommendations, the Senior Management Committee emphasized, in particular in regard to proposals relating to delegation, the need to ensure, throughout the organization, consistency and a common purpose; this was an important overall objective that must be maintained as Project Delphi went forward. It strongly endorsed the Objectives and Overall Recommendations of the CMG Report and agreed that these should serve as the foundation for the work on Project Delphi to follow.

### **III. THE NEXT STEPS**

10. The CMG Report, in accord with its mandate from the High Commissioner, proposed the next steps to take the initial recommendations further, and a mechanism to ensure their delivery. In the memorandum of 10 May 1996 referred to above, the High Commissioner accepted the Change Management Group's recommendation to establish a temporary Planning Group under the direction of the Deputy High Commissioner to support effective and speedy follow-up actions and to ensure the involvement of all concerned.

#### **A. Phase II**

11. UNHCR has now entered Phase II of Project Delphi dedicated to Action Planning. The purpose of Phase II of Delphi could be summarized as follows: to transform the conceptual framework for change provided by the CMG Final Report into a detailed plan of action for implementing change to be introduced throughout the organization, including an indication of actors responsible, the implications for organizational structure, the broadly-indicated cost implications, and a time frame.

12. In order to carry out the high-level planning, assignment of ownership, authority, accountability and quantification of implications as called for in the CMG Final Report in Phase II, the Senior Management Committee at its meeting on 23 May 1996 agreed that a number of Working Groups will be created under the leadership of the Senior Management of the Office. These Working Groups fall into three categories:

- (a) Working Groups on *Core Functions*  
Policy Formulations and Dissemination

External Relations

Operations Management

External and Internal Oversight

(b) Working Groups on *Structure and Internal Communications*  
Organizational Structure

Internal Communications

(c) Working Groups on *Support Functions*  
Human Resource Management

Programme and Financial Management

Information Technology

Training

The Planning Group is intended to play a substantial role in facilitating, coordinating and consolidating the output of each of the ten Working Groups indicated above. The inter-relationship of these Working Groups to each other and to the Planning Group is set out in the annexed table (Annex I).

13. To provide guidance to the deliberations of the Working Groups, the Senior Management Committee will hold a Workshop on 6 June 1996. Another Senior Management Committee Workshop is currently scheduled for 4-5 July 1996. A Special Senior Management Committee Meeting currently scheduled for early September will approve the Action Plan. It is recognized, however, that the currently agreed timeframe for Phase II will need to be kept under continuous review.

14. Once the Action Plan has been established, and the broad resource implications of the various proposals known, these will be presented to the Standing Committee in September 1996.

15. Phase III of the Delphi Project, the Implementation Phase, is currently scheduled to commence in September 1996. It is proposed that in Phase III, the implementation of the overall Action Plan will be monitored, evaluated and controlled by a Change Management Support and Coordination Unit set up by the High Commissioner.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

16. The final paragraph of the Report of the Change Management Group concludes with this observation: *CHANGE. The refugees deserve it. The staff want it. The organization needs it. And together, we are challenged to deliver it.* In presenting this report on the Delphi Project to the Standing Committee, the High Commissioner is also asking for its concrete support for this significant initiative.

*(Editor's Note: For technical reasons, it is not possible to reproduce here Annex I to this report. Please contact the UNHCR Library for the hard copy.)*