

INSPECTION, INVESTIGATION AND EVALUATION

INTERNAL OVERSIGHT

Inspection, investigation and evaluation are all elements of internal oversight, which serves as an objective review of management processes, systems and, ultimately, the policies of an organisation. The aim is to promote effective management at all levels and to ensure consistency in the application of standards. In 1999, UNHCR's internal oversight mechanisms were modified. Further to the recommendations made in a review carried out in June 1998, UNHCR's Inspector General's Office retained overall responsibility for undertaking thorough inspections of all aspects of UNHCR's field operations and remained the focal

point for investigations. Following a review of the evaluation function sponsored by the Canadian Government, the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) was set up within the Department of Operations, reporting directly to the Assistant High Commissioner. EPAU became fully operational in the last quarter of 1999. (Full details of the evaluation and policy analysis function in UNHCR, as well as all evaluation reports issued since 1996, are available online at the EPAU website:

<http://www.unhcr.org/evaluate/main.htm>).

INSPECTION

Inspections are an internal oversight and management tool to provide the High Commissioner and senior managers with a broad review of UNHCR's field representation and performance. Inspection reports include recommendations for improvements to overcome organisational and operational constraints. The goal of the Inspector General's Office is to inspect each UNHCR country programme every four to five years and, in any given year, to cover a selection of both larger and smaller operations in all geographical regions. The High Commissioner approves the annual inspection programme and a formal follow-up mechanism ensures compliance with evaluation recommendations, which are addressed to units at UNHCR Headquarters as well as offices in the field. The Inspector General's Office comprises the Inspector General, appointed by the High Commissioner, four inspection officers, a co-ordinator for investigations, and two support staff.

Inspections Undertaken in 1998

The High Commissioner originally approved 16 inspections for 1999. Five inspections were postponed owing to developments affecting the countries concerned, and the changeover of Inspector General at the end of April. The Inspector General's Office conducted the following inspections in 1999:

- January: Albania
- February: Burundi
- June-July: United Kingdom, Ireland and France
- July-August: Laos, Cambodia and Thailand
- November: Islamic Republic of Iran
- December: Canada and United States of America

Other Activities

The Inspector General's Office assisted in the establishment of new regional management structures in Africa and undertook a review of the role of the country desk officer at Headquarters. UNHCR revised its inspection procedures in the second half of the year, with the aim of streamlining the production of inspection reports, as well as action taken on their recommendations. Staff at the Inspector General's Office undertook training with a government inspection service, and the Inspector General and the Investigation Co-ordinator participated in the first UN Investigators' Conference, organised by the UN Secretariat (Office of Internal Oversight) in September 1999. A bilingual leaflet was produced for UNHCR staff, describing the functions of the Inspector General's Office and indicating how staff should report any situation or incident that may warrant investigation.

INVESTIGATION

The Inspector General's Office directs investigations of alleged or suspected wrongdoing. Investigation entails a comprehensive enquiry into possible misuse of UNHCR funds, resources or facilities, or any other illegal or improper conduct involving UNHCR staff, implementing partners or contractors. The outcome

is either referral for disciplinary action or closure of the case. Seven investigations were conducted directly by staff of the Inspector General's Office. UNHCR's capacity for investigation was reinforced by the appointment of an Investigation Co-ordinator, as from autumn.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is an important management tool that fosters institutional learning, change and accountability, thereby improving operational effectiveness. In 1999 UNHCR reaffirmed its commitment to evaluation by establishing a unit dedicated to evaluation and policy analysis, supervised by the Assistant High Commissioner. Two additional professional posts were assigned to the evaluation function during the year and additional funds made available for commissioning independent evaluations. The newly established EPAU is charged with the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR projects, programmes, practices and policies. It also promotes rigorous research on policy and operational issues, and encourages an active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policy-makers and the academic community.

In 1999 UNHCR also revised its evaluation policy, which is now guided by four fundamental principles:

- **Transparency.** Evaluation activities are to be undertaken in an open and transparent manner. All reports prepared or commissioned by EPAU, as well as earlier UNHCR evaluation reports, will be placed in the public domain in spring 2000 and actively disseminated to all interested parties.
- **Independence.** Evaluations should provide an objective analysis of UNHCR's activities and performance. In accordance with this principle, UNHCR will make extensive use of independent consultants with proven expertise in the evaluation of refugee protection and assistance activities.
- **Consultation.** The evaluation function will be undertaken in a participatory manner, with the involvement of key stakeholders. EPAU will strive to work in collaboration with partner organisations, and to ensure that the views of populations of concern to UNHCR are taken into account in the assessment of UNHCR's activities.
- **Relevance.** The work of EPAU must be relevant to operational needs and performance. It will strive to identify and promote best practice. Evaluation findings will be incorporated into UNHCR's planning, programming and policy-making processes, as well as its staff training activities.

Evaluation and Policy Analysis Activities

UNHCR completed a number of evaluation projects during the year, including reviews of:

- UNHCR's staff training activities;
- UNHCR's role in the training of implementing partners and government counterparts;
- Rehabilitation activities in the Great Lakes region of Africa;
- Compliance with UNHCR policy on women, children, and the environment.

The principal evaluation activity of the year was the management of an independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response during the Kosovo refugee crisis. Carried out by a team of independent consultants with wide-ranging expertise in emergency relief operations and refugee protection in the Balkans, the evaluation was initiated in June 1999 and published in February 2000. UNHCR presented its findings and recommendations to its Standing Committee in the first quarter of the year. In parallel, EPAU conducted an internal review of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity. UNHCR also focused on developing appropriate evaluation methodologies including 'real-time' evaluation techniques that can be applied at an early stage of future emergency activities. EPAU initiated a pilot project on the use of beneficiary-based and participatory evaluation methodologies, and began to organise a workshop on the effective incorporation of protection and human rights concerns into the evaluation of refugee and humanitarian programmes. The unit also initiated a project to review the various sources of field-based information available to UNHCR Headquarters, which will assess the relevance of such information to the evaluation process.

In consultation with partner organisations and members of UNHCR's Executive Committee, EPAU established a provisional evaluation and policy analysis work programme for the last quarter of 1999 and the year 2000.

Evaluations of the following were underway before the turn of the millennium:

- UNHCR activities on behalf of internally displaced persons (IDPs);
- UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas;
- UNHCR's role in ensuring the security of refugee-populated areas, with Kenya and Tanzania as initial case-studies;
- UNHCR's role and success in strengthening local NGOs;
- The implementation of the 1996 CIS Conference Plan of Action to address the problems of refugees, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant neighbouring States (in progress at the end of 1999).

