Enhancing UNHCR's capacity to monitor the protection, rights and well-being of refugees

Main report

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Chapter 1. A typology of monitoring

1.   Monitoring is a widely used tool supporting key management objectives such as the quality of performance and resource accountability. The precise meaning of monitoring varies between organisations, but definitions share a common language of continuous measurement and comparison to a previously established plan, situation or set of targets. Monitoring is essentially a tool that tracks change, be it progress within a project, or changes in a situation and the external environment. Descriptions of different types of monitoring are based on those most commonly used, but variations are acknowledged.

2.   This background paper briefly explains the meaning and purpose of different types of monitoring in the humanitarian sector. How UNHCR applies these terms in practice is the subject of Chapters 3-7.

The purpose of monitoring

3.   Monitoring is a management tool.   "Its purpose is to help all the people involved make appropriate and timely decisions that will improve the quality of the work[1]", and "for accountability for implementation according to plan[2]".

4.   UNHCR defines monitoring as "the ongoing review and control by management to ensure that inputs, work schedules and agreed actions are proceeding according to plans and budgetary requirements[3]."[4] The assessment has been done, the plans been made; the job of monitoring is to check that the organisation is delivering on its commitments. It is an integral component of the project cycle, continuously feeding back information throughout the life of the project that informs stakeholders of progress and enables adaptations to the plan if required.

5.   The "plan" in humanitarian agencies is often designed around a logical framework, which links the resources ("inputs") with the "activities" of the programme staff and the primary stakeholders to produce "outputs".

> The outputs are generally tangible products or effects (such as a rehabilitated school) which, it is hoped, will lead to a change in behaviour or condition of the primary stakeholders (such as literacy levels). The latter is often referred to as an "outcome", for shorter term change, or "impact" for longer-term change. All levels feed into the programme or project's objective, which is what it is seeking to achieve overall (for example a group of people able to read). The objective, often called purpose, ultimately feeds into a goal, usually some higher aim beyond the capacity of a single agency (i.e. people's overall protection, well-being, life of dignity).
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> In practice, the terms are often used interchangeably; what is of relevance to monitoring is that it is these outputs, impacts and goals that monitoring takes as its

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[1] Gosling and Edwards: *Toolkits*

[2] UNICEF M&E Training Resource 2003

[3] UNHCR Manual Chapter 4

[4] ibid: glossary definition: "continuous process of review undertaken by implementing partners, host government and UNHCR field office of performance during the implementation process. It involves the systematic review of financial and programme performance as measured against previously established planned achievements"

> target reference point; its starting point is a baseline study or assessment. Monitoring establishes progress from one to another through previously agreed indicators that measure progress (such as number of schools built; adults who can read).

Relating monitoring to assessment and evaluation

6.   Monitoring forms a crucial part of the project cycle. A needs assessment will determine the status of the primary stakeholders at that moment in time. This is compared with the desired state (e.g. in terms of the well being, protection and rights of refugees) which is typically derived from widely recognised global standards such as those enshrined in universal conventions on human rights and in humanitarian law. Operational examples of these include organisationally-defined but widely recognised standards (such as UNHCR's emergency water ration; WHO guidelines) and standards shared by a number of agencies such as those of the Sphere Project and in those articulated in the UN's Common Country Assessment (CCA).

7.   The difference between the present and the desired set of conditions becomes the operational plan, constituting its goals, objectives and the inputs and activities required to bring about the change from the current to desired conditions. Indicators measure progress towards the desired state.

8.   Additionally, the data collected by monitoring supports the evaluation function. Evaluation relies on the existence of good baseline and monitoring data to demonstrate change during the programme. Monitoring can also provide a record of changes to the programme made as a result of feedback or as a result of changes in the environment. The latter may have altered the key assumptions made and perceived risks at the outset of the programme.

9.   Monitoring is primarily a mechanism intended to continuously test whether the programme is doing what it set out to do with the resources and time at its disposal. By contrast, an evaluation is a periodic event, usually ex post, which as well as judging the effectiveness of the given programme will also question its overall value (for example its relevance and its coverage).

Types of monitoring

10.   Monitoring outputs is referred to in UNHCR as "performance" monitoring, which it differentiates from "impact" monitoring. In some other agencies, performance monitoring covers monitoring at all levels of programme's implementation, as opposed to situation monitoring which surveys the external environment, such as early warning monitoring or socio-economic trends.

11.   These different broad types of monitoring are referred to by ALNAP in its Annual Review 2003 as performance (related to the agency's own intervention) and situation monitoring, related to the external environment:

12.   As well as what, monitoring can check how a project is being implemented in terms of the processes used, for example how participatory it is.

Performance monitoring

13.   The following is adapted from chapter 2 of the 2003 ALNAP Annual Review and is a proposed typology of performance monitoring. Examples of UNHCR's equivalent forms of monitoring have been added:

Activity	Purpose	UNHCR example
Input Monitoring	Primarily for accountability as it should establish whether resources (human, financial, material) are being mobilised as planned.	Financial monitoring, disbursements to implementing partners (IP), supply chain,
Output Monitoring	Should establish whether products or services are being delivered as planned.	SPMR and monitoring of government activities showing, eg. 1. numbers of schools built 2. numbers of police contingents set up in the camp
Process Monitoring	Reviews the processes by which a programme is managed – including issues like participation by primary and other stakeholders.	1. surveillance visits 2. Focus group discussions 3. Informal contact with primary stakeholders
Impact Monitoring	Establishes whether a programme is having the anticipated impact and, if not, what changes to a programme may be needed.	1. school programme shows 50% of the female refugees can read. 2. refugees experience their environment as secure

14.   These, and UNHCR's own definitions of monitoring are concerned with the monitoring of the programmes being implemented. For UNHCR it includes programmes implemented by its own staff or by its implementing partners (IP). This traditional model of monitoring confines itself to the objectives established during the assessment-design stage, rather than questioning the rationale of the programme. For this reason, issues and questions such as coverage and whether the programme is appropriate in the first place are generally the preserve of evaluation, the initial programme design and subsequent reviews.

15.   Performance monitoring tends not to concern itself with conditions and people outside the boundaries of the organisation's programme. It is not concerned therefore with the status of those who were not included at the needs assessment and project design stage, nor is it concerned with changes in the environment that may or may not have an impact on the organisation's own area of responsibility or even have been caused by the organisation's own interventions.

Situation monitoring

16.   However, monitoring can also concern itself with the situation beyond an organisation's own interventions that directly or indirectly affect the fulfilment of its mandate. UNICEF for example, as well as tracking and measuring progress in its

programmes, also monitors a "change, or lack thereof, in a condition or set of conditions; for example, measuring change in the situation of children and women."

17.   UNHCR's coordination function and mandate for the worldwide protection of refugees necessitates knowledge of more than its own interventions. This includes knowledge of the overall coverage of needs by all actors, of refugees not necessarily being directly assisted by the agency and of contextual issues that directly or indirectly influence and affect its interventions.

18.   In humanitarian practice, the context may be constantly changing; the "system" being monitored is not itself necessarily stable. Even a basic variable such as how many people require protection may be constantly fluctuating. As a result, the status of those receiving assistance and the status of those who did not require assistance at the time of a needs assessment may have changed. Organisations such as UNHCR therefore may reformulate their monitoring "question" to include all refugees, assisted within its programme or not.

19.   From the ALNAP Annual Review 2003:

• Focus on the context (political, economic, social, institutional, etc) and any rapid changes in this. • Emphasis on overall assessments, in particular baseline studies in relation to individual sectors. • Emphasis on Early Warning Systems and preparedness. • Emphasis on collective monitoring – since all humanitarian actors will have similar minimum information requirements.	**SITUATION MONITORING** ⇩
	INTERVENTION ⇧
• Focus on programmes and specific interventions by individual agencies. • Emphasis on monitoring inputs, outputs, process, and impacts of specific agency actions.	**PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

20.   Situational analysis is also used by UNHCR and Action for the Rights of the Child(ARC) to refer to a ".. focus on the wider context and in identifying refugee capacities and resources as well as needs and problems[5]". Situation monitoring in that context therefore relates to a beneficiary-based programme designed on the basis of their capacities as much as their needs. Situational monitoring will tend, like impact and process monitoring, to focus on primary stakeholders' own perceptions of impact and include changes in capacity and resources as part of its progress.

Impact

21.   Equally, the "result" that monitoring may be required to answer may be too complex or comprehensive to be served by tracking outputs such as how many sacks of food distributed or how many refugees have been registered. Monitoring outputs does not inform stakeholders of "signs of behavioural change in conditions or institutional practice that affect beneficiaries and their welfare"[6] - whether the project

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[5] ARC 2002

[6] UNHCR *Project Planning in UNHCR A Practical Guide on the use of Objectives, Outputs and Indicators.* DOS, UNHCR, 2002

has had an impact.   Behaviour-orientated objectives such as empowerment or improved hygiene practice not only demand the use of different forms of measurement, but may also be a composite of several other indicators.

22.   As a result, monitoring is "increasingly employed to refer to the tracking of all aspects of a project, including the scanning of the external environment and the impact achieved (whether intended or unintended).[7]"   This latter application of monitoring extends the scope from the surveillance of progress with respect to tangible outputs (often referred to in the UN as "deliverables") within the selected group of primary stakeholders to measuring whether or not there is any change in people's lives as a result.

23.   Measuring this type of change is considerably more complex, more unpredictable and normally the result of an aggregate of causes. Those causes can range from the interventions of other humanitarian agencies, government, changes in the political or natural environment to otherwise unexpected behaviour change of the primary stakeholders and so on. The effects may or may not be those that were intended by the project and are only partially influenced by the intervention. Hence impact monitoring must take account of factors increasingly outside an agency's immediate control and, most of all, the perceptions and value placed upon the intervention by the primary stakeholders themselves.

Process monitoring

24.   There are different interpretations of process monitoring. Some largely refer to subjective valuations of the programme, normally the perceptions of the primary stakeholders and as such are similar to components of impact monitoring. Process is also a key component of monitoring activities itself, as the primary stakeholders can themselves conduct the monitoring. In this case, the process itself is intended to be a component of the programme's impact (for example, empowerment as a result of shared responsibility for and influence on quality control).

Frequency of monitoring

25.   The frequency of monitoring generally relates to the (anticipated) speed of change and the importance of the factor being monitored as well as the ease with which it can be monitored. For example the monitoring of the incidence of life-threatening diseases should be frequent. Output monitoring frequency should relate to how quickly the outputs can be produced, for example a latrine building programme has little use of a daily monitoring system.

26.   The monitoring of process and impact typically takes place over an extended period of time as such changes are slower and their measurement may demand more time and resource-heavy processes.

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[7] Chris Roche, *Impact Assessment of Development Agencies. Learning to Value Change*

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Chapter 2. The protection framework

UNHCR's protection mandate

1.   In 1950, responding to the massive number of people displaced during the Second World War[1], the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution creating UNHCR. According to the terms of its governing statute, UNHCR was established to provide protection to refugees and to seek permanent solutions to their plight by facilitating their voluntary repatriation or their assimilation within new national communities.[2] Because it was established to respond to the particular post-war European refugee problem, the Office was not initially intended to be a permanent one within the UN system.

2.   The expected expiration of its mandate, however, did not materialise, as the need for the international protection of refugees continued unabated. As a result, UNHCR's mandate has been extended and its role as an international protection agency expanded in ways not envisioned at the time of its creation. Whereas once it was a Eurocentric institution, with an initial budget of US $300,000, focused on local integration and voluntary repatriation of 400,000 European refugees, today it operates in 123 countries with 5,000 staff on a budget of approximately 882 million dollars, assisting over 20 million refugees and others of concern. Its protection work is engaged in efforts to encourage accession by States to international refugee protection instruments, to ensure the rights of refugees are respected, to provide emergency relief as well as longer term care and maintenance, and to seek durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, local integration, and/or resettlement.

Refugees and people of concern to UNHCR

Convention refugees

3.   According to the terms of its implementing statute, UNHCR was to assist refugees defined as those who as a result of events occurring before 1951, were outside their country of origin, and because of a well founded fear of persecution there for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion were unable or unwilling to return. This definition, broadened to include persecution for reasons of membership in a particular social group was incorporated in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the 'Convention'), the first international legal tool available to UNHCR in the exercise of its protection mandate. The geographic and time-limited nature of the definition of refugee, reflected the fact that UNHCR and the Convention were created to respond to problems of WW II refugees. As new refugee crises emerged in the following decades, it was necessary to broaden the definition. The 1967 Protocol to the Convention removed the 1951 dateline and its limitation to events in Europe, enabling those who had become refugees after 1951 to be recognised as such.   In 2001, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Convention, State Parties reaffirmed their commitment to implement their 'obligations under the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol fully and effectively in accordance with the object and purpose of these instruments.'

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[1] It was estimated that over 40 million people were displaced in Europe at that time, 400,000 of whom were outside their counties of origin. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: Fifty years of Humanitarian Action*, 2000

[2] *Statute of the Office of High Commissioner for Refugees,* s. 1, General Assembly Resolution 428(v) of 14 December, 1950.

Refugees as defined in regional instruments

4.   The Convention does not cover all those who are in need of international protection. It is limited to those who can show a reasonable chance of being persecuted for one of the five reasons set out in its definition. Individuals who flee from violence in their countries for reasons other than those mentioned in the Convention, yet who may be in need of international protection because of the destruction of their homes, their means of subsistence or because of risk of indiscriminate harm, lie outside the Convention's provisions. It was these type of circumstances that often characterised the refugee movements in Africa at the end of the colonial era and which prompted the Organization of African Unity (OAU)in 1969 to broaden the definition of refugee in its regional treaty (OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa). A refugee under the OAU Convention includes those who have fled civil unrest, widespread violence and war, regardless of whether they have a fear of persecution for a Convention ground.[3]

5.   In 1984, a colloquium of Latin American government representatives and jurists also recommended a broader definition of refugee, similar to that contained in the OAU Convention. Known as the Cartegena Declaration, although not legally binding, the definition recommended in it has been incorporated into domestic legislation by some States and used as a matter of practice by others in the region.[4]

Persons the General Assembly asks UNHCR to assist

6.   In addition to protecting refugees as defined in international instruments, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have regularly broadened UNHCR's mandate through resolutions calling on UNHCR to assist not only 'refugees' but also 'others of concern' because of their need of international protection.[5] These include former refugees who have returned to their countries, persons who have been displaced within their own countries due to armed conflict or generalised violence (internally displaced persons 'IDPs') and people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed. Presently there are close to 8 million persons of concern to UNHCR, approximately 5 million of who are IDPs.[6]

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[3] The OAU Convention adds to the 1951 definition, including as refugees those compelled to leave their country of origin because of 'external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order' in either part or the whole of their country.

[4] The definition recommended in the Declaration includes the 1951 Convention definition and also persons who have fled their country 'because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.'

[5] The legal basis for this is found in paragraphs 3 and 9 of the UNHCR's Statute. Paragraphs 3 provides that 'the High Commissioner shall follow policy directives given to him by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.' Paragraph 9 states that the 'High Commissioner shall engage in such additional activities, including repatriation and resettlement, as the General Assembly may determine, within the limits of the resources placed at his disposal.' Above note 2. For a complete compendium of GA and ECOSOC resolutions relating to issues of concern to the UNHCR see UNHCR, Thematic Compilation of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Resolutions, (Department of International Protection, 2003).

[6] UNHCR, Statistical Yearbook, 2002 pp 19-23.

Scope of international protection

7.   The need for international protection arises when persons are faced with threats to their fundamental human rights and are unable to avail themselves of the protection due to them from their own states. Refugees and other persons of concern have been uprooted and are often bereft not only of the protection of their governments but also frequently of the support of their family, clan or larger community. They may face severe acts of physical aggression from members of their host society or from other refugees. Woman and children are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender based violence. Refugees may also be may be exposed to other threats to their physical security, such as harassment and arbitrary detention, inadequate means of substance, lack of medical care and access to other social services. They may be denied opportunities for self-sufficiency by being refused permission to work and/or to otherwise integrate into the community.

8.   The right of refugees to physical security and the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights, lies at the core of UNHCR's international protection mandate, the overall objective of which is summarised in the Preamble to the 1951 Convention: 'to assure refugees the widest possible exercise of …fundamental rights and freedoms…which are normally secured to for the individual by his or her Government.'   Chief among UNHCR's legal protection tools are the international instruments that define the basic standards for the treatment of refugees (i.e. the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the OAU Convention), international human rights law (e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenants of 1996)[7], domestic legislation and Executive Committee Conclusions. Non legal protection tools include education and training activities designed to assist governments in meeting their protection obligations under international and domestic law and guidance to government, non-government and UNHCR workers in the field on how to identify and effectively respond to the protection needs of refugees and others of concern.

UNHCR's protection functions

9.   International refugee law and human rights law are the foundations of UNHCR's protection functions, which today are designed to ensure 'the enjoyment on equal terms of the rights of women, men, girls and boys of concern to UNHCR in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law.'[8] Its wide-ranging protection activities begin with working with governments to ensure admission of refugees and extend until lasting solutions are found.   In its relations with governments, UNHCR not only encourages accession to the relevant international refugee instruments but also seeks to ensure that state parties to such instruments

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[7] The important of protecting fundamental human rights expressed in the UDHR and other rights treaties has been stressed on many occasions by the General Assembly in its resolutions concerning the activities of the UNHCR. See Thematic Compilation above note 5. Among the important human rights instruments that post-date the refugee Convention are: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR66) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (ICESCR66); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965 (ICERD65); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979 (CEDAW79); the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment 1984 (CAT84); the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC89).
8 UNHCR, IOM/FOM No. 43/2002, 'Designing Protection Strategies and Measuring Progress: Checklist for UNHCR Staff', July 2002.

treat refugees within their territories in accordance with international standards. This includes providing asylum-seekers with access to asylum procedures and protection from being removed to a country where they have reason to fear persecution (known as the *non-refoulement* principle). It also encompasses ensuring that recognised refugees are accorded appropriate legal status and access to economic and social rights.

10.   UNHCR also works with governments and non governmental agencies to protect the rights of refugees and others of concern, covered under international human rights law. This includes ensuring the personal security of refugees, encompassing a myriad of inter-related activities such as making sure refugee camps are secure from attack, that they are designed to keep women and children safe from sexual assault, and that clean water, adequate shelter and sanitation are provided. Protecting refugees and others of concern also entails ensuring that they have sufficient food to maintain good health and access to health services. Other rights-based protection work involves ensuring the registration of refugees and provision of documentation necessary for access to essential services, universal access to primary education and maintenance of schools for children, the tracing of family members to facilitate family reunification, and arranging for appropriate care for separated children.

11.   UNHCR's second core mandated function, to seek durable solutions, also involves a myriad of activities that overlap with its protection work. In assisting refugees become self sufficient, UNHCR supports the creation and maintenance of training centres, income generating projects, micro-credit and the placement of refugees in local commercial enterprises. It works with governments and other international agencies in addressing the root causes of flight so as to create an environment where it is safe to return. Where this is achieved, UNHCR facilitates voluntary repatriation. To date, the largest repatriation effort has been in Afghanistan where over the last two years 2 million refugees have returned home with the assistance of UNHCR and other international agencies. For most of the 20 million refugees and persons of concern to UNHCR, voluntary repatriation remains far from being a realistic alternative. Especially in protracted refugee crisis, many of which are located in Africa, UNHCR continues to work on alternative durable solutions such as third-country resettlement or local integration.[9]

Implementing Protection Strategies

12.   Traditionally UNHCR made a distinction between its 'international protection' functions and its humanitarian activities. The former was considered 'legal' and 'diplomatic' in character and extended to 'refugees' as defined in its statute and in international instruments. [10]   The latter was not restricted to 'refugees' but also extended in certain situations to those who were internally displaced, or who were

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[9] More recently, the High Commissioner has called for the development of special tools, in the form of multilateral agreements, some of which would be specifically designed to facilitate durable solutions by achieving multilateral commitments for resettlement and or repatriation as well as development assistance to promote self reliance among refugees and returnees. The initiative is known as 'Convention Plus', was introduced at the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in October 2002.

[10] UNHCR/BOM/49/81, 'Categories of Persons to whom the High Commissioner is Competent to Extend International Protection', 5 August 1981.

repatriating to their homes. It was felt that in order to avoid confusion between the two functions, 'serious efforts should be made to distinguish the international protection function of the High Commissioner from that of his purely material assistance activities'.[11] 'Legal' forms of protection were seen as efforts to promote accession to and compliance with international refugee instruments (e.g. registration, protection against *refoulement*, establishment of and access to asylum procedures, granting to recognised refugees rights set out in those instruments).   These responsibilities were seen to be at the core of the work of what is now the Department of Protection (DIP). Other forms of material protection were regarded as essentially 'humanitarian' in character such as provision of housing, food, health care, education, and vocational training, responsibilities of other programme and field staff within the Department of Operations.

13.   The distinction between 'legal' protection and 'material' forms of assistance proved neither logically nor practically sound.   In the first place, UN General Assembly resolutions have extended UNHCR's competence to persons not specifically referred to in UNHCR's statute.[12]   UNHCR's activities in response to these requests are no less 'legal' than its actions on behalf of refugees as defined in its statute.   Moreover, the content of UNHCR's protection function has also expanded protection being recognised, and specifically referred to in General Assembly resolutions, as ensuring not only that the rights contained within international refugee instruments are respected, but that the fundamental rights embodied in other international conventions are also observed.[13]   These include the right to life and security of the person, the elimination of forms of discrimination against women, the right of children to education and of separated children to be reunified with their parents.   The protection of these rights involves legal advocacy as well as material assistance such as access to food, shelter, health care, education and special care arrangements for unaccompanied children.[14]   Moreover, effective protection demands an integrated approach, recognising the linkages between the provision of material assistance and the protection of the refugees from physical assaults and exploitation.   So, for example, while the prevention of sexual and gender based violence is a clear priority for legal staff officers, it is no less so for staff who are responsible for food distribution.   The provision of sufficient food is not only necessary to sustain life and good health, but insufficient or inequitable food rationing is one of the well-documented factors leading to the sexual exploitation of women and children.

14.   In its 'Note on International Protection' presented to the Executive Committee in 2000, UNHCR observed that its 'international protection function had evolved greatly over the past five decades from being a surrogate for consular and diplomatic protection to ensuring the basic rights of refugees, and increasingly their physical safety and security.'   In words also endorsed in General Assembly resolutions, UNHCR characterised international protection as a 'dynamic and action-oriented function' encompassing a 'range of concrete activities, covering both policy and operational concerns', carried out in co-operation with States and other partners, 'with the goal of enhancing respect for the rights of refugees and resolving their

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[11] Ibid.

[12] These are found in *Thematic Compilation* above note 5.

[13] Ibid.

[14] In fact, if UNHCR did not offer material assistance, host governments may be reluctant to allow UNHCR access to refugees.

problems.'[15] These characteristics of its international protection mandate are further reaffirmed in the *Agenda for Protection*,[16] endorsed by the Executive Committee in October 2002, which sets out a multi-year programme of action for States, UNHCR, NGOs as well as other partners to strengthen refugee protection.   The *Global Objectives* 2003 also reflects the extensive, multi-layered nature of UNHCR's protection mandate, setting out specific objectives and indicators of progress for the coming year.[17]

15.   Although at a policy level, the Office has embraced a broad view of protection that involves 'multifaceted activities' that to be effective requires an 'integrated and collaborative approach within UNHCR offices', in practice this has not become a fully operational. As various internal and external evaluations have pointed out[18], far too frequently UNHCR staff concentrate on their particular area of expertise, viewing issues of protection as being within the domain of protection officers and to some extent community services staff. Shortages of protection staff coupled with a tendency of many to view their responsibilities narrowly contribute to the fragmentation of the protection mandate. In addition, community services are under resourced and over-stretched. As a consequence, programmes are not systematically planned or implemented within the context of a broad protection agenda, and significant gaps in protection can develop which have at times resulted in serious preventable rights violations. This constitutes a significant dilemma and challenge currently facing the institution, namely, how to implement fully and effectively its protection mandate in all aspects of programme planning, implementation and monitoring while facing staff and project cuts.

Partners in Protection

16.   Providing international protection to refugees and others of concern is not solely a UNHCR responsibility. In fact, States have the primary responsibility of ensuring the fundamental rights of everyone within their jurisdiction.[19]   One of UNHCR's primary tasks is to assist governments in discharging their international obligations and to secure their commitment and co-operation in ensuring that the necessary actions are taken to protect refugees and others of concern.[20] Most host

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[15] UNHCR, 'Note on International Protection' 7 July 2000 para 4.

[16] A/AC.96./965/Add.1 of 26 June 2002.

[17] It is interesting, however, that at various points in this document the UNHCR's mandate is described using the old distinction between international protection and humanitarian assistance: 'to provide international protection to refugees and others of concern', moreover, 'to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to those of concern to the Office from the outset of an emergency, until such time as the beneficiaries have found a solution to their plight…' at p. 8.

[18] See for example the following evaluation available on www.unhcr.org: 'Meeting the rights and protection needs of refugee children: An independent evaluation of the impact of UNHCR's activities', (EPAU/2002/02), May 2002; 'A beneficiary-based evaluation of UNHCR's programme in Guinea, West Africa' (EPAU/2001/02) January 2001; 'UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on Their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation, May 2002; See also UNHCR, 'Observations from IGO Missions Implementation and Proposals for Policy Considerations' (March 199 to March 2002).

[19] See ICCPR, Article 2.

[20] In particular, the High Commissioner shall provide for the protection of refugees by 'promoting the conclusion and ratification of international conventions for the protection of refugees, supervising their application and proposing amendments thereto; and by 'promoting through special agreements with Governments the execution of any measures calculated to improve the situation of refugees'. *Statute* above note 2 para 8(a)-(b)

governments do not have sufficient resources to meet the needs of those seeking asylum within their borders. Other states, UN agencies and non-governmental agencies are important partners in UNHCR's protection work. UNHCR also works with the international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank particularly in its development assistance work with refugees to promote self-reliance.

17.   The importance of effective partnerships with NGOs and other implementing agencies is frequently stressed in UNHCR protection training materials, operational management guides, and in UNHCR's *Agenda for Protection*[21] and *Global Objectives*.[22] Most of UNHCR's implementing partners are NGOs whose importance in fulfilling UNHCR's protection mandate is also abundantly clear when one considers that there are over 700 NGOs in 120 countries that implement the majority of UNHCR's projects. In recognition of this, in 1997 UNHCR initiated the Reach Out process to ensure that operational partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs contribute to increased refugee security. An important element of this process has been training of NGO staff in protection principles, standards and working methods. Reach Out is supervised and implemented by international NGO networks together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. A textbook, *Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs* published jointly with UNHCR is a key training tool.

18.   Despite the recognised import of building and maintaining effective partnerships, UNHCR still faces accusations that it does not treat its implementing partners as true partners in protection. Among the criticism of UNHCR are that it fails to consult with its partners, is willing to take information from partners but provides little benefit in return, and that it does not engage its partners actively in programme design or evaluation.[23] The emphasis in the various protection and operational management training materials[24] on the need to build effective partnerships, and the steps for doing so, suggests that there is recognition in within UNHCR that more work needs to be done in this area to fully operationalise key partnership principles.[25]

19.   In the past UNHCR's programmes tended to focus on individual service delivery and did not include activities to engage and build upon the capacities of refugees themselves and their communities. By failing to engage refugees consistently in programme design, delivery and in strategies to enhance self development, gaps in protection were more likely to develop and a climate of dependency engendered with significant attendant psychological, social and economic costs. Five years ago, UNHCR, with several NGOs undertook a critical appraisal of UNHCR service delivery and examined how it could be enhanced by

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[21] A/AC.96./965/Add.1 of 26 June 2002.

[22] UNHCR, *UNHCR's Global Objectives and Indicators of Progress*, Global Appeal 2003, 8.

[23] Noted in 'A beneficiary-based evaluation of UNHCR's programme in Guinea, West Africa' and 'UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on Their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation' above note 18. Also raised by staff in interviews at Headquarters and in the field.

[24] See for example, Division of Operational Support (DOS), *Partnership: An Operations Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners*, 2003; DIP, Protection Learning Programme, as well as *Agenda for Protection* above note 21.

[25] See DOS, Operation Management Learning Programme (OMLP) and DIP, Protection Learning Programme (PLP), and *Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs* published jointly by UNHCR and its NGO partners, 1999

greater emphasis on community development.[26] Since then the Office has put more emphasis on engaging refugees and treating them as resourceful partners in its assistance and protection work.[27] While the approach is recognised as a sound one, evaluations have demonstrated that it is not always consistently or effectively applied in practice.   Limited staff time spent speaking with refugees, unrepresentative refugee camp committees are among the problems that have been identified.[28]   At the same time, programmes that have an inclusive and equitable participation from refugees have been noted as effective and the UNHCR praised for its human rights' awareness training work with refugees.[29]

Protection and monitoring

20.   Monitoring the rights and wellbeing of refugees is one of the essential means for UNHCR to fulfil its mandate. It provides UNHCR with information necessary to plan its programmes, assess their impact, and improve performance.   UNHCR management training materials, emergency guides and protection learning programme[30] stress the importance of ongoing and regular monitoring of the situation of beneficiaries, project implementation and program delivery, all with a view to ensuring that UNHCR's work is addressing the needs of refugees and others of concern in as responsive and effective manner as possible. The job descriptions of protection officers and most programme delivery staff include a monitoring component. UNHCR reporting requirements, from situational reports through to Country Reports, Annual Protection Reports, and Country Operations Plans all are a means of reporting what has been monitored in UNHCR operations around the world.

21.   Despite the emphasis on monitoring and all the monitoring-related activities UNHCR staff are engaged in, it has become apparent that there is an absence of systematic and consistent data-gathering and analysis, no rigorous or uniform approach to monitoring itself, and no acceptable means of reporting monitoring information in a readily accessible format.   In recognition of the deficiencies in UNHCR's current monitoring function, the *Global Objectives* commit the organisation to improving its ability to assess the protection requirements of refugees and others of concern and analyse the performance of UNHCR and its partners in regard to provision of protection and assistance. This includes enhanced population and data-collection and their use for monitoring and assessment.   It also includes the development of consistent standards against which the situation of refugees and others of concerned can be measured and programs assessed along with indicators to that can clearly convey quantitative and qualitative improvements or deterioration in the protection and well being of refugees. While enhanced data collection and analysis and more effective reporting against sound standards and indicators will

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[26] See Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 'Reinforcing a Community Development Approach' EC/51/SC/CRP.6 15 February 2001.

[27] Note for example that is emphasised in the OMPL and the PLP, above note 24 and is reflected in the UNHCR, Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care, 1994; Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, July 1991 as well as many other UNHCR publications.

[28] See evaluations above note 22.

[29] See 'Meeting the rights and protection needs of refugee children:' above note 17. According to the Protection Operations Support section of DIP, this training is ad hoc, there being no standardised UNHCR module for the training refugees on human rights issues.

[30] See note 22 and UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*, Part II.

undoubtedly improve UNHCR's monitoring capacity, these developments must be supported by a variety of other actions and a common perception that all UNHCR's activities have, as the ultimate objective, the protection, broadly defined, of refugees and others of concern.

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Chapter 3   UNHCR's monitoring cycle and the assistance sector

1.   Monitoring triggers unfortunate associations for many people, most of them dull or negative. Linked to notions of control and supervision, its full potential is often lost in the tools, instructions and data that, of necessity, are the foundation of its various functions.

2.   This paper looks at UNHCR's monitoring cycle, examining the different phases of its monitoring system from design through to collection, analysis, communication and use. The discussion on monitoring tools focuses specifically on tools used in the assistance sectors. The mechanisms for monitoring in the protection sector are analysed in Chapter 4[1]. Other aspects of this paper apply equally across sectors, and demonstrate the many issues and challenges faced by the organisation in designing and implementing a monitoring system that meets the multiple demands of its stakeholders from individual refugee to nation state.

3.   UNHCR's monitoring is an "on-going review of operations to track whether protection and solutions interventions are having the desired impact and are proceeding according to plan, with benefits equitably distributed to targeted groups within agreed timeframes and costs"[2]. In common with many organisations, UNHCR defines monitoring as a mechanism to enhance the management of its own and its partners' performance with respect to its stated operational objectives.[3]

The planning and policy background to UNHCR's monitoring tools

Why does UNHCR monitor?

4.   Monitoring supports UNHCR's accountability. The above and other UNHCR definitions of monitoring emphasise the control of resources and results. Accountability, in its broader sense, commits UNHCR both to perform to certain standards and to account for itself by, for example, reporting to stakeholders. The introduction of results-based management in the late 1990s led to a number of in-house initiatives designed to improve the ability of UNHCR to demonstrate not only how its resources were being used but with what result. The pressure to do so was both internal and external. Hence monitoring, although primarily serving as a performance management tool for UNHCR "to provide feedback to decision-makers, identify problems, measure progress and impact, improve operational plans and allow for timely corrective measures",[4] must also serve a reporting function for internal and external stakeholders. Stakeholders, moreover, who are not necessarily linked to the sequence of information, responsibility and action inherent in models of accountability and programme quality.

5.   Monitoring also improves the quality of evaluations through providing dynamic information on changes and documenting the reason for variations from original plans and expected results. UNHCR's monitoring information - and therefore monitoring systems - must therefore take account of potentially quite

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[1] "Monitoring in the 'Protection' Sector" Chapter 4

[2] Section 1.4, UNHCR Manual Chapter 4, June 2003; also the definition used in the Operations Management System described in Monitoring and the UNHCR Management Environment, Chapter 5

[3] For a full discussion of the different types of monitoring used by humanitarian agencies, see Chapter 7, 'Monitoring in Other Agencies'

[4] Operations Management Learning Programme Unit 7: Monitoring

different needs and balance "a natural inclination for the performance measurement framework to preferentially meet external reporting needs"[5] with the aim of optimising programme quality.

6.   A more recent and urgent sub-set of UNHCR's use of monitoring has been the need to demonstrate the impact of the 2000 funding crisis: "While country offices could provide details of foregone procurement or cancelled distributions of relief items, this did not give an indication of how mortality, the nutritional status or literacy rates had been affected"[6].   Providing an objective assessment or supplying monitoring information vis-à-vis globally recognised benchmarks is crucial for UNHCR to persuade the donors that refugee protection and welfare has suffered as a result of the funding cuts; "at present, donors are unconvinced by the link"[7]. Similarly, assessing the well-being of refugees with respect to universal standards has been suggested as a means for the agency to allocate its resources globally on the basis of a more objective comparison of need.

7.   As a result, in 2002 a process began involving several Divisions of the agency, coordinated by the Programme Co-ordination and Operations Support Section (PCOS) of the Division of Operational Support (DOS) to create a "core set of quantifiable standards and indicators" for use by operations world-wide[8]; feedback was sought from the field and a final version distributed as an internal memorandum in February this year. This core set (*Validated Core Set of Standards and Indicators,* hereafter referred to as the *Core Set*[9]) was developed principally to enable global comparison of programmes through consistent use of standards that can be quantified, are universal rather than regionally specific and are convertible into budgets[10].

The planning framework

8.   The chief building blocks of monitoring are assessment (including baseline) data, standards and indicators and a programme design that details clear objectives, outputs, inputs and activities. UNHCR's assessment and planning mechanisms is not the subject of this review.   However, they determine <u>what</u> monitoring information should be collected and how. They share with monitoring the common reference point of UNHCR's standards on protection and well-being.   This fundamental link to standards requires a brief outline of UNHCR's planning frameworks and language.

9.   The gap between the current situation (assessment) and accepted standards[11] broadly translate into the programme plan, determining the outputs, objectives. Monitoring assesses the progress towards attaining those objectives and UNHCR's strategic goals. Assessment (and evaluation) are often confused with monitoring and

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[5] Implementation of Results Based Management in UNHCR

[6] Discussion paper on standards. UNHCR

[7] Macrae, 2002 Bilateralization of humanitarian aid. UNHCR.

[8] Memorandum from Mengesha Kebede, Chief PCOS to Marjon Kamara, Director DOS, 19 June 2003

[9] "Validated PCOS Core Set of Readily Quantifiable Indicators and Standards for Operational Use" IOM/FOM 13/2003 February 2003

[10] Dominik Bartsch, EPAU October 2002

[11] UNHCR's standards are based on national and international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law as well as international humanitarian standards

the terms used interchangeably. Monitoring, as understood by UNHCR and this paper, is concerned with the progress of and continuing relevance of plans already made in relation to needs already defined. To that end, quality monitoring is highly dependent on quality assessment and programme design, an issue of concern to UNHCR and the wider humanitarian community[12].

10.   UNHCR has developed a number of guidelines to support staff in the development of objectives and indicators[13]. A principal tool is *Project Planning in UNHCR: A Practical Guide on the use of Objectives, Outputs and Indicators"* hereafter referred to as the *Practical Guide[14]* in which the Hierarchy of Objectives, a variant of the logical framework, is developed and explained. More detail is given in Box 1.

11.   The use of indicators is one of the key elements of UNHCR's measurement of impact and progress[15].   UNHCR uses two types of indicator, performance and impact, which relate respectively to the outputs and objectives.

Box 1

UNHCR's hierarchy of objectives provides a framework for country programmes to develop objectives for each sector at every programme level from strategic goal to project level outputs for each sector. The Hierarchy of Objectives is part of UNHCR's results-based Operations Management System (OMS). It retains the "if…then" logic of the Log Frame and uses a similar matrix that places inputs, outputs and objectives in a logical vertical relationship and links them to indicators as a means of measuring the attainment of the outputs and objectives.

Log Frames are classically a 4x4 matrix. UNHCR's main point of departure is a simplification by removing the two columns which describe the means by which the monitoring data will be collected and the assumptions and risks associated with the each component of the plan[16].   This has implications for data collection and monitoring the external environment, described below. It has also dropped the rows showing activities and inputs with their associated indicators. The result is a matrix of two columns and two rows. One row shows the objectives, linked to "impact" indicators, and the second row shows outputs, linked to "performance" indicators. The matrix, used in planning at the project level and linked to agreements with partners also includes a cell to describe the "current situation" thereby building in a reminder of the assessment/baseline against which the objectives are set, facilitating monitoring.

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[12] See for example ODI 2003 current study on Measuring Need

[13] Principal amongst these are the relevant sections of *UNHCR Manual, Chapter 4 particularly sections* 3 and 4; *Project Planning in UNHCR: A Practical Guide on the Use of Objectives, Outputs and Indicators; The Handbook for Emergencies;* and its extract, *A Handy Guide to UNHCR Emergency Standards and Indicators*

[14] Also referred to by UNHCR staff as the Blue Guide

[15] Section 1.4, Chapter 4 UNHCR Manual

[16] The "classic" Log Frame includes a "Means of Verification" column (i.e. how the indicator information is to be collected), and a "Risks or Assumptions" column (for example "continued availability of appropriate rice seed" or "security permits access to the refugees)

The language of standards and indicators in UNHCR

12.   There are variations in how UNHCR applies the terminology of standards and indicators in its various guidelines. Whether indicators are "units to measure signs of change towards the achievement of results" (*Practical Guide*, UNHCR) or "signals that show whether the standard has been attained" (Sphere, 2000) does not matter - except inasmuch that it affects the design of the monitoring system and causes some confusion.

13.   Examples are given in Box 2, using one sector, comparing the use of standards and indicators from three sources. As the box detail shows, the *Practical Guide* for example, whilst using the above measurement-orientated definition, often applies a Sphere-type "signal" indicator (15

14.   litres of water is a "signal" that the qualitative standard of "adequate quantities" of water is being met). The later *Core Set* instead define the signal-type indicators as a standard (>15 litres water) and apply an indicator as a measure (actual quantity of water available). What may be a standard in one framework, is an objective in another and each of the key documents variously uses or excludes objectives or standards altogether.

15.   The *Practical Guide (*and indeed the *UNHCR Manual)* follows a similar format to Sphere. It would appear that in the *Core Set*, UNHCR subsequently moved back towards the "measurement" indicator used previously in the *Handbook for Emergencies* and the *Handy Guide,* other key manuals of for staff. Variable interpretations of the terms are also evident in the different sectoral planning tools described below.

Box 2

	Practical Guide (UNHCR(	**Sphere**	**Core Set (UNHCR)**
Objective or Standard	[Standard: not stated] Objective 1 "[camp population] consume adequate quantities of clean water [for drinking and hygiene purposes]	[Standard 1] All people have safe access to a sufficient quantity of water for drinking, cooking and personal and domestic hygiene	Standard: >15 litres/ person/ day
Indicator	Impact Indicator 1.4: "provision of minimum [15] litres p/d **one of several indicators required to meet the objective.	At least 15 litres of water per person/day is collected **one of several indicators required to meet the standard	Average quantity of water available

Does it matter?

16.   UNHCR is by no means alone in using the terminology in different ways or even interchangeably. The important issue is whether the planning logic works and whether the indicators are measurable - it does and they are. In planning terms then, it means little. With respect to monitoring however there are implications.

17.   Positively, UNHCR's use of indicators in the *Core Set* as measures of progress (rather than the target being aimed for as used by Sphere) makes translating the planning tool into a monitoring tool easier since it will show change over time. But there are risks associated with inconsistency and lack of coherence with the language used by UNHCR's partners.

18.   Firstly, there is a risk of confusion (internally) since from the user's point of view, the variation in the language of the UNHCR guidelines could produce different versions and add to the genuine difficulties most people have in understanding this approach to programme planning.   Additionally, variations weaken the integrity of comparison between programmes and projects[17]. This is particularly important given UNHCR's plans to develop an organisation-wide system for the analysis of key data. Different sets of indicators also increase staff workload by (perhaps unintentionally) apparently demanding different sets of monitoring information according to whether it is for headquarters to use for global comparison or for their own, field-level quality control.

19.   Secondly, UNHCR's monitoring of assistance is principally through partners. If some of those partners are using different standards and terminology (probably that of Sphere), further confusion could arise. True, UNHCR and its implementing partners have to agree on standards and indicators during the proposal stage of planning anyway, and this process should clarify the language[18].   It is however an additional hurdle for staff and partners to achieve consensus and represents additional work for UNHCR to translate monitoring information into its own framework.   This is particularly so when the partner is not in any contractual relationship with UNHCR and not obliged to use its standards.

Given that so many partners use Sphere, should UNHCR adopt Sphere's language[19]?

20.   Most common definitions of indicators are of the measurement type,[20] not Sphere's signal indicators and, at any rate, translating Sphere into a monitoring tool necessitates introducing a method for showing progress towards indicators. Additionally, in the technical sectors, the similarity between many of UNHCR's "standards" and Sphere "indicators" means that the translation from one to another is minimal; many of Sphere's indicators were originally drawn from UNHCR or the same globally accepted sources. Several of UNHCR's *Core Set* standards are in fact already those of Sphere, rather than UNHCR targets.   Nonetheless, differences remain.

21.   No opinion is expressed in this evaluation on the relative merits of Sphere or UNHCR standards. What is of issue is agreeing on the language and definitions and aiming for those most likely to yield consistent and quality monitoring information. UNHCR's reduced "market share" in the funding of humanitarian projects means

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[17] Especially if information is logged in yes/no or numerical form. For example, two programmes, both of which are providing more than 15 litres of water could respond differently to the question of "Is the Water Quantity Standard Met?". One partner or UNHCR staff could answer "NO" if they are using the Sphere or *Practical Guide* standard, because the standard requires several indicators to be met in order to ensure the standard of "adequate" or "sufficient" water is met (such as proximity and so on). A second respondent, using the *Core Set*, can answer "YES" (or even enter "15" in a database).

[18] UNHCR and partners can easily, for example, agree that the 15 litre Sphere indicator is the standard in UNHCR's reporting or programme formats. Agreeing on impact indicators that would demonstrate qualitative objectives/standards such as whether access and quality were assured is more difficult and discussed further below

[19] Although Sphere has not been adopted by all humanitarian actors in the field, it has become a major reference point for many. It has been endorsed by the IASC working group, OCHA, UNICEF, ECHO, is increasingly used by other donors and host governments, has sold @40,000 copies and been spontaneously translated into more than 20 languages.

[20] For example OECD/DAC's indicator definition "show results relative to what was planned"

that it is less in a position to call the shots and more in need of obtaining others' information with the least effort. This implies using the global standards most commonly used by other actors.

22. Developments that optimise UNHCR's compatibility of standards and language with other actors are strongly supported by this evaluation. The current work of PCOS to further develop standards beyond the current core set to support field monitoring should respond to many of the concerns raised in this paper and should be fully supported[21]. It is important that UNHCR moves swiftly to resolve its position on minimum standards and streamlines the language in its own guidelines and hence in its negotiations with partners.

23. It is suggested that, where they do differ from its own, UNHCR uses Sphere indicators at least within its core priority indicators; this facilitates both the access to information and coherence with the majority of partners. It may be advisable for UNHCR to use the term "target" for these indicators, rather than "standard", to clarify the difference from Sphere and avoid confusion with the NGOs[22]. This terminology is also consistent with many other frameworks, including the Common Country Assessment Indicator Framework used by the United Nations.

Training

24. Finally, the persistent challenge of providing training cannot be ignored. The process of analysis promoted by the logical framework is not easy; most people find it confusing at first; a workshop approach may not be enough to enable the trainees to use the tools effectively. PCOS, for a year, provided feedback on the first attempts at this type of approach in the Country Operations Plans (COPs); this type of coaching was apparently widely appreciated. UNICEF has opted to use a coaching approach to monitoring and evaluation; UNICEF's analysis is that using the tools on-the-job is thought to be a more effective way of increasing staff capacity. For that reason, it is suggested that, given the need of UNHCR to prioritise training, it should emphasise a trainer of trainers approach and target those most likely to be able to support and coach others by application and support to their ongoing work.

Recommendations

> ➢ In the proposed continued work on the consolidation of standards (coordinated by PCOS) common agreement must be obtained on the language used in its formulation of standards and indicators and all guidelines subsequently streamlined accordingly. It is recommended that the formulation used is the one adopted by PCOS in the *Core Set* of indicators except that the term target is used instead of standard, to avoid confusion with partners

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[21] See the PCOS 2003 workplan

[22] Sphere standards are similar to project objectives, typically being the intended result of achieving a number of supporting targets (the "indicators"). Hence any monitoring system using Sphere as its basis must interpret the indicators as targets and report on progress towards them.

➢ Streamlining should ensure that each set is compatible with the other - for example the *Core Set* should, wherever possible, be a component of the sector's own proposed indicators and standards

➢ UNHCR should increasingly adopt Sphere standards and indicators as the basis of its core assistance targets

➢ The decision on what targets are used should take close account of current developments in management information systems (i.e. the Management Systems Renewal Project MSRP) to ensure that they are compatible with proposed database-orientated analytical tools

➢ Target trainer of trainers in monitoring for ongoing coaching of staff and partners

The monitoring cycle

25. Even a cursory glance at the availability of guidelines and tools tells a story. As figure 2 below shows, a lot of work in recent years has gone into the development of planning guidelines that will support staff to design <u>what</u> they should be monitoring. Also well represented is the number of reports by which to communicate information. Much less has so far been achieved in terms of the process of monitoring and of monitoring processes themselves, on how to collect, analyse, make sense of and use the data to enhance the protection, rights and well being of the refugees. Indeed the coherence between what is collected, how it is collected, how analysed, communicated and used is unclear, and arguably so far absent.

Perhaps the main question to ask of UNHCR's existing cycle of monitoring is whether the reason for monitoring and obtaining information is clear. Do users know what they want and what they want it for? Does the same information and the same communication media deliver on the multiple demands of different stakeholders both within and without UNHCR?

The following seeks to answer these questions through a review of the tools developed within in each sector. The overall issues are discussed for each stage of the cycle with specific comments for each sector. *Additional detail is contained within the boxes by way of illustration.*

Figure 1: Tools and Mechanisms used by UNHCR for each stage of the monitoring cycle
(noted in bold)

PROGRAMME PLAN

DESIGN
- What is monitored (standards, sample objectives, indicators, guidelines)

MAIN TOOLS: (NB the following are tools that refer directly to monitoring, it is not intended to be a list of the many manuals and sources of standards, planning or assessment guides);
* **The Practical Guide**
* **UNHCR Manual**
* **The Handbook for Emergencies**
* **The Validated PCOS Core Set**
* **The Handy Guide**
* **Education Field Guidelines**
* **Health, Food and Nutrition ToolKit**
* **People-Oriented Planning**
* **Action for the Rights of Children**
* **Community Services: Exploring Standards and Indicators**
* **Environmental Indicator Framework**
* **UNHCR Manual on Self Reliance**

USE AND ACTION
Decision-making and Accountability mechanisms for responding to monitoring information SEE CHAPTER 2:
 * **Contractual and informal redress with IPs**
* **Funding allocations (e.g. Operations Review Board)**
* **Job descriptions**

COLLECTION
- Tools and means to collect information for monitoring

* **The SPMR**
* **Co-ordination Meetings**
* **Forms for technical sectors (various)**
* **Field visits**
* **Meetings with partners**
* **Informal contact with partners**
* **Informal contact with beneficiaries**
* **Participatory and beneficiary-based techniques (ARC & POP)**

PURPOSE
?

COMMUNICATION
Tools for conveying monitoring information internally and externally

* **Annual Report to ECOSOC**
* **Annual Report to EXCOM**
* **Special reports to donors**
* **Annual Protection Report**
* **Country Annual Reports**
* **Annual Statistical Report**
* **Annual Resettlement Statistics**
* **Sitreps**
* **Sub Project Monitoring Report**
* **Final Project Monitoring Report**
* **Global Report**
* **Note for the File**
* **Ad hoc verbal communications**
* **Ad hoc emails**

ANALYSIS:
- Interpretation and manipulation of data collected for management purposes
e.g. guidelines on analysis, sample databases etc

No organisation-wide systems or tools. Various pilots from HQ and in-country innovations

Stage 1.   Design - What to monitor

26.   What is monitored is often described by sector (protection, health, water and sanitation etc[23]), or by caseload (camp populations, urban, returnees).

27.   Overall, the tools available to help the field develop indicators of assistance as part of the planning process are adequate. They are mostly accessible, mostly feasible in terms of the likely availability of the data and mostly clear. They are of course also a long way from perfect. This is particularly regarding the variable use of terms and the, usually large, number of indicators.

28.   The proposed scale of data collection in the assistance sectors is generally predicated on the existence of a technical specialist; since this is the exception rather than the norm, these guidelines risk building in their own redundancy from the start.

29.   Notwithstanding that and the above-mentioned urgent need to make decisions on standards and the provision of indicators harmonised across the various guidelines, the early part of the monitoring cycle for the assistance sectors is in relatively good health compared to later in the cycle, and more developed in general than in the protection sector[24].

Health, food and nutrition

30.   The *Health, Food and Nutrition Toolkit[25]* (referred to here as the ToolKit) is the primary source of monitoring tools for each of these three sectors, compiled as a comprehensive set of checklists, guidelines, assessment, monitoring and evaluation tools and references to support the work of field practitioners.

31.   The Toolkit is subdivided into three sectors with relevant tools as well as an essential reference section and cross-cutting tools and templates such as sample Terms of Reference (TORs), gender sensitivity checklists and guidance on refugee participatory approaches.

32.   Each sector is further divided into two sections: tools for programme and planning and tools for monitoring and evaluation.

Food and nutrition

33.   The main monitoring design tool is the *Examples for Food and Nutrition Indicators* table. This essentially follows the *Practical Guide* 4x4 framework of objectives, impact indicators, outputs and performance indicators. The example table proposes 3 objectives with 10 associated impact indicators, and 51 performance indicators linked to the outputs.

34.   The table is clear, easy to use and well thought out. The indicators are measurable and make a clear link to data collection methodologies. Further development of the tools for monitoring in food and nutrition are better targeted at

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[23] The sectors reviewed in this paper are Community Services, Education, Environment, Food, Health, Nutrition, Sanitation, Shelter and Water.

[24] See Chapter 4, 'Monitoring in the Protection Sector'.

[25] UNHCR, Health and Community Development Section (HCDS) September 2001

later stages in the cycle (analysis, communication and use) where few, or no, tools exist.

35.   That said, a useful improvement would be guidance on prioritisation, built into the table. Even a well-resourced programme is unlikely to collect data against 61 indicators and staff could be forgiven for ignoring the tool altogether.   Unfortunately it is difficult to use the *Practical Guide* as a way of prioritising the ToolKit indicators as the structure is too different. The *Core Set* is easier to link, with four of the six indicators duplicating the ToolKit and hence suggesting some sort of prioritisation. The *Core Set* are not considered by headquarters nutrition staff as an adequate representation of food security and nutrition states. Hence an intermediate set, between the *Core Set* and the ToolKit indicators would help a resource-challenged programme to prioritise wisely.

Box 3 Detail on the Guidelines

Nutrition indicators are included in the The *Practical Guide's* Food and Health sections. Compatibility is weak between the Practical Guide and Toolkit indicators, with some factors listed in the Toolkit as outputs or impact indicators but described as performance indicators in the *Practical Guide* (for example in the Practical Guide, that protocols are in place for surveying nutritional status and identifying malnourished people are performance indicators; in the Toolkit they are listed as outputs, describing the systems themselves (such as MUAC) as the indicators. The % of recovery is listed as an impact in the Toolkit and an indicator in the Practical Guide). In many ways this does not matter, as the programme logic still works, however it is confusing for the user designing a monitoring system based on the indicators suggested.

The coherence between the Food section in the *Practical Guide* and the Toolkit is better, with 3 of the 4 impact indicators in the former the same as the Toolkit.

36.   What is missing is advice on how to monitor protection issues integral to food and nutrition. Future versions should include cross cutting protection concerns; work already completed on food-related sexual violence[26] and specialist concerns regarding women and children and environment could be built into existing checklists, mainstreaming the issues better.

Recommendations:

 ➢ Mark which indicators in the ToolKit are the priority to monitor for generalist staff

 ➢ Mainstream protection and cross-cutting issues such as gender and children

 ➢ Ensure that indicators and standards are coherent between different sources of guidelines

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[26] *Potential links between food aid, distribution of relief items and sexual exploitation and proposed preventive/remedial actions.* HCDS UNHCR

Health

37.   The Toolkit table on objectives, outputs and indicators has 3 objectives, 12 sample impact indicators and 47 performance indicators. The *Practical Guide* uses different objectives but shares many of the same impact indicators and has more performance indicators. It has 7 objectives, 10 impact indicators and 45 performance indicators.

38.   It does not follow the *Practical Guide* framework; the objectives tend to be output or best practice statements. For example, the first objective is a list of guiding principles for primary health care programmes such as "is designed to ensure maximum sustainability" rather than articulating what the programme seeks to change. The second objective is again a statement of best practice ("quality PHC programmes are designed based on needs assessments, implemented and adequately monitored and evaluated") and are hence difficult to link to the outputs and are not linked to measurable indicators. By contrast the outputs and performance indicators are clear and make sense.

Recommendation:

> ➢ To be more useful to the field, the table should develop proper objectives with associated impact indicators.

Education

39.   Published this year, UNHCR has produced an updated set of guidelines *Education: Policy and Field Guidelines* and is working on the production of an Education Toolkits, similar in purpose to the Health, Food and Nutrition Toolkit. Geneva staff are also working on establishing a database for an educational profile for each country, facilitating subsequent monitoring.

Box 4 Detail on the guidelines

The Education Guidelines are structured around 10 key policy statements which are based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the *World Education Forum (2000): Education for All Assessment: Framework for Action (*International Consultative Forum on Education for All, UNESCO, Paris). Each statement includes a set of principles and related guidelines on their implementation.   Standards are interspersed throughout the text and are subsequently summarised and expanded in the appendices. The appendices consist of the (relevant education-related Articles of) the Convention of the Rights of the Child, six sample objectives with associated outputs and indicators and a set of standards for class sizes, materials, infrastructure, equipment and general characteristics expected to an education programme.

40.   Although there are a large number of indicators proposed (45), the frequency of collection is often low (e.g. by term, or annually).   The Guidelines are accessible and clear and if there is a dedicated member of staff for education, or adequate generalist cover with training, the guidelines are invaluable.

41.   The constraint is that if, typically, generalists are responsible for monitoring education along with many other sectors, they are unlikely to have the time to read,

never mind apply a document of this length, totalling 52 pages. The *Practical Guide* proposes a reduced set with 2 objectives, 6 impact indicators and 11 performance indicators. Several performance indicators would be served by the same data source (e.g. enrolment records) making them more operational. The Education Guidelines and *The Practical Guide* are compatible, reducing the likelihood of confusing staff. The *Core Set* shares some of the indicators although different percentages are sometimes used to fix the standard without apparent reference to global standards[27] and contradict the Guidelines in this respect, again potentially confusing users .

42.   Because of countries' obligations under the 1951 Convention, basic education statistics are the most likely to be available from government. New instructions for education statistics were issued in January 2003 and they include several of the *Core Set* indicators. "By the end of June 2003, 54 UNHCR country operations had reported"[28] demonstrating that when the information is available and the organisation wants to, it can report against basic quantitative performance data. Whether or not this means that the children are educated is another matter, discussed further in impact monitoring below.

Recommendation:

> ➢ Streamline the proposed standards and indicators between the Education Guidelines, the *Core Set* and the *Practical Guide* with due reference to global standards

> ➢ Guide field staff in the selection of priority indicators that provide an intermediate monitoring basis between the Education Guidelines and the minimal *Core Set.* If these are different to the *Practical Guide* this should be clarified and the latter subsequently edited

Water

43.   The principle source of water-related standards is UNHCR's *Handbook for Emergencies*. Staff also use the *Handy Guide* and there is a UNHCR Water Manual for further guidance[29]; these manuals do not make any suggestions on turning standards into a monitoring tool. *The Practical Guide* suggests two objectives with 8 impact and 10 performance indicators. The latter is the only explicit guidance on monitoring currently available; indicators otherwise can be created from the guidelines found in the manuals. Field staff are essentially designing their own monitoring systems.

44.   Does the sector need to produce monitoring guidelines, with easily accessible key standards and suggested formulations of indicators?

45.   At present, although many of the standards are fairly well known and applied (and often consistent with well known Sphere indicators), the inconsistency between the manuals and the *Practical Guide* and the variations in the latter's design (see the

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[27] e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child commitment to 100% access to primary education. PCOS standard is 80%

[28] Education Statistics 2002-2003

[29] Water Manual for Refugee Situations, Programme and Technical Support Section. UNHCR 1992

box below for more detail) means that staff are unlikely to produce consistent and comparable monitoring systems, a pressing need for the organisation.

Box 5: Detail on the guidelines

Staff can in theory translate the guidelines found in the text into standards and indicators (e.g. "Ideally, no dwelling should be further than 100 metres or a few minutes walk from distribution points" (Handbook) could convert to 100 metres as the target (or standard depending on the terminology) and actual distance divided by 100m as the indicator. The *Practical Guide* offers a ready translation into a monitoring system although it is not entirely consistent with the *Handbook*. This is partly due to the *Practical Guide's* tendency to mix the use of standards and indicators. For example the performance indicators are both Sphere-like indicators "0.2-0.5 mg per litre of residual chlorine" (which is consistent with the *Handbook*) and ratio-type indicators "% vulnerable groups ..benefiting from safe access..". In the latter cases, the "standard" being aimed at is not necessarily mentioned, e.g. distance to nearest water points "<Xm" where X is not defined. The *Handbook's* 100 metres figure contrasts with the PCOS *Core Set* reference of <200 m. Which should be used?

46.   The Engineering and Environmental Services Section (EESS) plans to produce adapted guidelines for the water sector, including improved planning and monitoring tools. This initiative should be supported as, whilst by no means the biggest monitoring challenge facing the sector, the absence of agreed, readily accessible standards and proposed indicators collected together in one place will hamper the water sector's developments in monitoring.

Recommendations:

➢ Develop one consistent set of standards and indicators for the water sector in a readily accessible format.

➢ The set should contain a minimum as well as optimum set of indicators that must be monitored in all cases, whether by generalist or technical staff.

Sanitation

47.   The principle source of sanitation standards on which to base a monitoring system is, like Water, the *Handbook for Emergencies*. The emphasis is on quantitative indicators and for that, the *Handbook* is an accessible source that also provides templates for data collection forms facilitating analysis. More qualitative indicators are included in the *Practical Guide* that develops standards from the *Handbook* and other references[30] to produce a set of 17 indicators. Again, the user may be unsure as to what the standards are in all cases (e.g. they differ on refuse bins) but in general the information is readily available.

48.   Of the 6 indicators proposed in the *Core Set*, 3 are of information not collected under the proposed indicators in the *Practical Guide*. Whilst neither is intended to be comprehensive, field staff may be confused about what to collect and certainly as to what the priorities are. Headquarters is currently developing a set of indicators for field staff.

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[30] Vector and Pest Control in Refugee Situation, UNHCR/WHO Geneva 1997

Recommendations:

➤ As with other sectors, sanitation sector's efforts to produce a set of proposed indicators that are consistent and readily accessible for the field should be supported.

➤ The set should contain a minimum as well as optimum set of indicators that must be monitored in all cases that sanitation programmes are being implemented

Shelter

49. The source for shelter standards is the *Handbook for Emergencies* that describes the overall principles, guidelines and standards of the shelter sector. The standards are interspersed throughout the chapter. The *Practical Guide* suggests 9 indicators and, similar to the *Handbook*, largely limits itself to the primary quantitative issues of space. The *Core Set* is based on the same standards but has developed qualitative indicators regarding privacy, cultural acceptability and functionality (e.g. formulating "adequate" shelter in terms of its ability to protect from the elements rather than quantity). The development of more standards that can demonstrate quality and functionality would help staff develop climate-specific outputs that fulfil the same universal standard. (e.g. "protection from the elements" implies different materials depending on whether the shelter is in a cold or hot and wet country).

Recommendation:

➤ Develop one set of consistent standards and indicators as recommended for other sectors and further develop qualitative indicators that emphasise the practical and subjective functions of shelter

Environment

50. The *Handbook for Emergencies* contains a small number of references to environmental concerns; they are largely principles rather than guidelines and there is nothing on the monitoring of environmental impact and programme interventions. As a result, a three year project ("FRAME") is currently being implemented to develop a range of tools and guidelines for environmental assessment, monitoring and evaluation. At present a draft rapid rural appraisal manual, a rural appraisal manual and a participatory monitoring manual are being tested, as well as a pilot run in 2 countries using a GIS system and a data base (in place in Guinea and Uganda). A draft environment monitoring system has been created "*Environmental Indicator Framework: A Monitoring System for Environment-Related Activities in Refugee Operations. A User Guide* (EIF). The EIF, although field tested in Ethiopia, is not being used as a framework by the five environmental consultants currently in the field for UNHCR and, at the time of writing, further tools are currently being developed.

51. As is recognised by EESS, the EIF is a good example of the strengths and the pitfalls of designing a monitoring tool without taking account of other sector's guidelines and field constraints. With some 168 indicators and frequent confusion between indicators, standards and objectives it would be hard to operationalise in

the field - even with a dedicated Environmental Coordinator or Officer. Positively, the EIF attempts to demonstrate the inter-related nature of sectors and monitoring, and includes indicators from sectors such as health and nutrition. However, the selected indicators are frequently not drawn from those sector's own guidelines, making the collection of data both less likely and potentially inaccurate. The EIF however does attempt to solve a problem that receives scant attention elsewhere - how to prioritise data collection and how to analyse it. This important feature is further discussed in the Analysis section.

52.   There are no environmental indicators in the *Core Set* or the *Practical Guide*, although the latter includes a shared objective on aforestation under its Forestry section, albeit with incomparable indicators.

53.   As with other sectors, it is crucial that the present work on developing monitoring tools is done in close collaboration with PCOS and new developments in management systems under the MSRP.

Recommendation:

> Ensure that the current work on developing monitoring tools collaborates fully with other initiatives, particularly those in PCOS and the further development of management information systems

> Ensure that the guidelines and numbers of indicators are prioritised, feasible to collect and analyse, enabling generalist staff to select the minimum monitoring requirements in the absence of environmental specialists dedicated to monitoring the sector

> Explore the possibilities for integrating environmental monitoring with the monitoring carried out by other sectors and specialists

Community services

54.   The development of standards and indicators is part of the ongoing work of the Community Services Unit (CSU) to operationalise a Community Development Approach[31] and increase the understanding, implementation and impact of Community Services in the organisation.

55.   Developing standards and indicators for Community Services is particularly challenging, not least because the Community Services' remit is vast, variously covering a number of separate, specialist sectors such as income generation, unaccompanied minors, special needs, psychosocial projects, HIV/AIDs, adult literacy, major sectors such as education and environment in the (frequent) absence of specialists in those sectors and, in many cases, projects of special interest or organisational focus such as Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), children and the 5 commitments to women and children.

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[31] Excom 2001 "The community development policy defined in this paper highlights the fact that refugees should be "subjects" in the search for durable solutions and be considered as resourceful and active partners, rather than "objects" or passive recipients of assistance"

56.   Monitoring the performance of such diverse areas of responsibility would be challenging enough without the fact that Community Services' work is underpinned by developmental objectives that are notoriously hard to measure, such as empowerment, self-reliance and capacity building. Process objectives crucial to the achievement of all UNHCR's programmes, such as the full participation and equal access for all intended beneficiaries also are entrusted to Community Services.

57.   Community Services was not included in the *Core Set* of indicators due to the difficulties of including indicators for relative intangibles such as capacity building. This is particularly so as the *Core Set* indicators aimed to be quantifiable, universally comparable and convertible into monetary terms[32]. In response to this challenge, CSU commissioned research to, amongst other things, develop core quantitative indicators for the *Core Set* project and to contribute to subsequent work by CSU to review its guidelines, manuals, policy and training. A Community Services Core Set has now been proposed.[33]

CSU carried out a survey, sending out a list of proposed standards and indicators to the field to obtain feedback[34]. A "top 6" set of indicators that respondents most agreed were "a relevant measure of the status of the beneficiary population" are proposed for inclusion in the *Core Set*. It is also proposed that CSU use a similar set of 6 indicators (5 of the 6 are the same as the PCOS set) for internal management purposes such as reviewing COPs.

The survey included 2 sections. The quantitative section proposed 29 indicators clustered around 4 standards (of Analysis, Community mobilisation and participation, Capacity building and Ensuring the Protection of Individuals with Special Needs).   An additional set of qualitative indicators were included for reference but were not part of the survey. Respondents were asked to state to what degree they agreed that the indicators were relevant measures of the status of the beneficiary population and the 29 indicators were ranked accordingly.

58.   Perhaps unsurprisingly, the choice of six core indicators reflects the concern of Community Services staff with ensuring access to services rather than developmental objectives such as empowerment. This reflects the difficulty of translating the latter into quantitative indicators and hence leads to an emphasis on outputs[35] (such as "% of disabled who have access to appropriate …. services"[36]).

59.   Each indicator also represents several sectors (""supported .. to access services, assistance and protection" and incorporates qualitative criteria such as "appropriate". Community Services staff must therefore collect information across all sectors, make a combined assessment of attainment and include more subjective and context-specific judgements on whether the services are appropriate.   Hence although apparently objective, the quantitative figures contain a high degree of subjective and

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[32] For a full discussion see Bartsch 2002a

[33] See Wofford, B. *Community Services: Exploring Standards and Indicators.* UNHCR 2003

[34] ibid

[35] It may also reflect the way the Community Services respondents in the field interpret their role, reflecting a pragmatic prioritisation on outputs in the field, rather than emphasising Community Services principles regarding developmental objectives

[36] Wofford

aggregate judgements. Still, given the nature of the Community Services function and the political and practical need to contribute to the organisation's need to quantify and compare, it is hard to see how the CSU can otherwise express its progress and achievements.

60.   CSU have made a valuable start; some system now exists through which managers in the field and headquarters can at least know if the activities and structures required to achieve Community Services' higher goals are in place. As CSU themselves recognise, the indicators act as a sort of checklist in the absence of organisational clarity regarding the role of Community Services.   The challenge now is to work on ways of collecting, analysing and communicating qualitative and beneficiary-based information that can complement the two-dimensional data of quantitative monitoring. In recognition of the need, CSU have recruited a consultant whose terms of reference include, amongst other tasks, developing an operational tool to enable field staff to assess and plan in an integrated, beneficiary-based way. This will likely build on the "situation analysis" tool of the Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC) toolkit[37] which is discussed below.

Recommendation:

 ➢ Build on the work of Wofford and ground-truth the core set of indicators in selected locations. For example carry out a more in depth review or mid-term evaluation with beneficiaries to check the correlation between a proxy indicator for, say, capacity building, with refugees' own perception of increased self-reliance/women's leadership etc to optimise the extent to which the indicator is sensitive to qualitative change

 ➢ Maximise the impact of Community Services objectives by mainstreaming developmental objectives into other sectors, who then take responsibility for them (e.g. WatSan ensures female representation on water committees)

 ➢ As with all other sectors, combine forces with other divisions and initiatives such as those in PCOS and, particularly, the Department of International Protection (DIP)

Qualitative and quantitative - an integrated approach

> "*Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts.*"[38]

61.   Existing tools emphasise quantitative data or semi-quantifiable proxy indicators for behaviour and attitudes[39] rather than on providing guidance on how to obtain and use qualitative feedback. and how to understand the wider context and background of the refugees themselves.

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[37] A joint project between UNHCR, Save the Children, UNICEF and OHCHR; first produced materials 1997

[38] Albert Einstein, quoted in Roche, C. 2002

[39] e.g. "Beneficiaries accept basic food ration and consume" as a proxy for food acceptability

62.   In UNHCR "Situation Analysis"[40] is the main tool for a ".. focus on the wider context and in identifying refugee capacities and resources as well as needs and problems[41]". Thus it promotes an integrated analysis based on an understanding of the social and political context, refugees' capacities and vulnerabilities, priorities and perceptions. [42] The materials produced by ARC are a primary source for staff on Situation Analysis and its associated participatory techniques and methods designed to maximise the participation of the refugees "essential for deriving accurate and credible information from and about the refugees"[43]. Although Situational Analysis is a tool designed for assessment, the techniques and general approach can equally be used for ongoing monitoring. Indeed, they can be used to involve the refugees in the process of monitoring itself.

63.   A long-established tool also used by UNHCR to help staff look beyond simply assessing material and legal needs is People Oriented Planning (POP)[44] which encourages an assessment of the political, economic and cultural context of origin and present, and of external factors such as political events, general economic conditions and national attitudes towards refugees.

64.   The existing tools do not include how to involve the refugees themselves in actually monitoring. There are undoubtedly examples of this[45] but guidelines have not been developed. The degree to which full participatory monitoring is feasible (which would include the refugees' involvement in assessment and programme design) is dependent on the context and the capacity of the implementing partners. Nonetheless, greater consideration could be given to this as a powerful tool in generating ownership, sharing responsibility for monitoring and reducing costs.

65.   Monitoring *Process* is similarly essential with respect to refugees' perceptions of well-being - as the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) field trial is Sierra Leone discovered, the beneficiaries "did not so much question *what* they received. Their main concerns related to corruption and the *way in which aid was delivered* (i.e., issues of information and arrogance)[46]". The approach used, the way in which monitoring is done, whether through participatory approaches or questionnaires is as essential as what is monitored.

66.   Staff need considerable support to have the skills to ensure the full participation of primary stakeholders in design and monitoring. The inclusion of a process indicator or two, showing *how* participation was taking place, would raise awareness and act as a checklist. That also means the full participation of partners from the outset, where all key stakeholders involved in the implementation share the same overall strategy and can determine, at the assessment-planning stage, how and what to monitor.

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[40] also referred to as situational analysis

[41] ARC 2002

[42] Situation Monitoring in many agencies more commonly refers specifically to the world beyond the programme plans, e.g. "Situation monitoring measures change in a condition or a set of conditions, or lack thereof (e.g. changes in the situation of children and women or changes in the broader country context" from Monitoring and Evaluation Training Modules, UNICEF 2003

[43] CASA: The Community Services function in UNHCR

[44] People-Oriented Planning: A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations. UNHCR 1992

[45] A limited level of participatory monitoring was seen in the camps in Sierra Leone by refugee wardens

[46] HAP 1st Trial Sierra Leone July 2002

67.   There is an argument that suggests organisations should not seek to capture and summarise qualitative information in the form of indicators and standards, but should recognise the value of different types of information to different stakeholders as "these interest groups will judge impact in different ways"[47]. Several interviewees suggested that the majority of UNHCR's monitoring was informal - daily, casual contact between staff and refugees. Of issue, is capturing that information that typically leads to ad hoc adaptations or to none at all. This is further discussed below and in Chapter 2.

68.   Durable solutions and a community development approach increase the need for staff to be able to use qualitative monitoring methods. Measuring change in self-reliance or female empowerment demands more complex proxy indicators that do not easily fit a reduced and quantitative PCOS- type of framework. Qualitative monitoring is not comparable from country to country; it is only comparable with the perceptions before and after of the particular people involved.

Recommendations:

➢ Include approaches and techniques for refugees carrying out monitoring as part of the new Community Services guidelines

➢ Include at least one process indicator in the core set for each sector

➢ Ensure that the (necessary) quantitative emphasis of the *Core Set* does not lead to an exclusion of qualitative monitoring in the field

Impact monitoring

69.   Ideally, it is monitoring the impact of the programme, intended and unintended, that UNHCR and its partners should be focusing on. Impact most closely answers the question "how is UNHCR affecting the protection and well-being status of the refugees?". Impact indicators in UNHCR relate to the objectives level of the logframe and, according to the *Practical Guide,* measure evolution of the general welfare situation from year to year and of processes, policies and practices, along with "the specific qualitative change in conditions or behaviour targeted during a given project".

70.   The *Practical Guide* gives ample examples of the project type of impact indicator; there is no guidance on how to measure and report on the evolutionary aspects.

71.   Impact monitoring must be able to map trends over time and measure conditions and behaviour. Several factors discourage longer term monitoring including the annual planning and budgetary cycle of UNHCR, high staff turn over and unstable contexts. Country Operations Plans (COPs) are not required to state the impact or progress data of the preceding year as a kind of baseline. Inserting columns that show standards reached vis a vis any objectives that are continuing into the following year into each COP and Country Annual Reports (and Annual Protection Reports) would be a simple way of demonstrating longer term trends.

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[47] ibid

72.   Additionally, impact can only be determined if the baseline is known; weak assessments reputedly mean that staff, and partners, often do not know what the starting point of the programmes were. According to the current ODI study on Measuring Needs, UNHCR is clearly not alone in this weakness; poor needs assessments are common in the sector.

73.   An impact indicator is also a type of composite; several performance indicators lead to the change it measures and hence it is one of the best methods of prioritising what is reported through condensing, rather than diluting[48]. For that reason, wherever possible, the *Core Set* should use impact, rather than performance indicators. It is recognised that it is often more difficult to collect such information; ("Often the most that can be done is to demonstrate through reasoned argument that a given input leads logically towards a given change"[49]. The *Core Set* feedback showed that, for example in food and nutrition, the availability of performance indicators was better than of impact indicators because, presumably, the former was already available through partners. For a partner to report on, for example, whether adults can read as opposed to simply whether they are in the class is significant in terms of staff skills and time. Such indicators should therefore be chosen carefully to be realistic.

Recommendations:

> ➢ Wherever possible, select impact, rather than performance indicators. Impact demonstrates a higher level programme objective and captures a condensed aggregate of data

> ➢ Build on existing initiatives, such as in the Health and Community Development Section (HCDS), to improve assessment quality across the organisation

> ➢ Require COPs and all annual reports to include the previous end-of-year status on key indicators in order to provide a running baseline for comparison

Monitoring the external context

74.   UNHCR's monitoring tends to focus on the performance of programme interventions rather than on monitoring the context in which they take place or monitoring the people of concern who currently fall outside the programmes.

75.   Monitoring change and trends in the political, social and economic context is the overall responsibility of the Representative and, presumably, all Heads of Office although this is not explicit in the job descriptions.

76.   As mentioned above, UNHCR's adapted logframe has removed the "Assumptions or Risks" column which normally includes indicators for external

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[48] for example an impact indicator measuring female adult literacy rate is measuring what the programme intends overall; this effectively combines a number of performance indicators such as building a venue for the classes, measuring attendance rates, ensuring gender sensitive planning (e.g. timing of classes to fit women's commitments)

[49] Roche, C. 1999. Impact Assessment for Development Agencies. Oxfam GB 1999

conditions beyond the agency's control that could significantly affect the programme. These latter conditions themselves need monitoring - changes in local community or government attitudes to the refugees, (increased risk of refoulement), the continuing deterioration in conditions of the country of origin suggesting that the refugees will not be able to return as soon as originally expected (and therefore perhaps the camp will be needed for more than the 6 months envisaged) and so on.

77.   Monitoring assumptions is critical to maintaining programme relevance. This is particularly so in emergency contexts in which the initial assumptions may have been little more than hypotheses and knowledge about the population is limited. Further, the programmes themselves may change the context through unintended impacts extending beyond the implementation objectives.

78.   According to the ALNAP review of monitoring, agencies typically neglect or under-use secondary data on context and background, such as is available from government, academic institutions and development agencies with a long term presence in the country. This is a good example of the opportunities available for working in partnership rather than in isolation discussed below and in Chapter 4.

Recommendations

➢ Operationalise situation or context monitoring. One option is to consider reinstating the assumptions/risk indicators in UNHCR's logframe in order to make explicit the significance of monitoring the link between internal and external change

➢ Formalise the links between context monitoring and programme monitoring (e.g. ensure that analysis of key assumption and risk indicators is fed into team meetings; that senior staff are tasked with exception reporting against key risks in their areas of responsibilities)

➢ Make full use of secondary data to better understand the refugees and context

Monitoring in different contexts and phases of an emergency

79.   And what of the refugees who live their lives beyond the routine reach, though not the mandate of UNHCR? Given the challenges already faced by the agency in monitoring assisted caseloads, is it realistic to question the apparent absence of advice on how to monitor low risk caseloads who nonetheless may be experiencing protection problems and whose conditions may change over time bringing them within the purview and care of the Office?

80.   The existing monitoring tools are designed with a camp or otherwise concentrated population in mind in which UNHCR and its partners have regular contact with the refugees and greater control over their environment. The agency faces considerable challenges in other contexts, particularly urban and returnee in which, as one country operation comments "the Office is confronted with the enormous logistical and practical problems encountered in measuring progress

against indicators in a large refugee situation scattered across several widespread urban centres in a huge country with a questionable refugee database"[50].

81. The challenges of monitoring returnees, particularly in rural settings are also considerable, yet mandatory for the agency is still responsible for "monitoring their safety and well-being on return"[51] and to "monitor fulfilment of the amnesties, guarantees or assurances on the basis of which the refugees have returned.'[52]

82. There are some examples of tools created for returnee monitoring found in the field. These, and the current plans of Protection Operations and Support (POS) to build on UNHCR's Afghanistan's example to create a generic returnee monitoring guide are discussed in Monitoring in the Protection Sector Chapter 4.

83. Self reliance projects often face challenges of time span as well as resources. UNHCR's Self Reliance guidelines recognise that UNHCR's annual planning cycle is insufficient for achieving self-reliance objectives and recommend a five year cycle. Such projects, focused on gaining new skills for employment and small businesses, usually encompass longer-term developmental objectives. The existing guidelines[53], about to be revised, include advice on monitoring, proposed strategies for four different phases from emergency to reintegration and lists possible indicators for monitoring objectives appropriate to different strategies towards self-reliance.

84. Planned revisions may bring a welcome boost to the sector, but the main challenge is that self-reliance projects are always the "first to be cut". Even if funded, the sector is covered by Community Services Officers, in the (frequent) absence of a dedicated specialist. Revised guidelines should take account of the potentially limited monitoring capacity of these overloaded staff and ensure that priority indicators are clearly described.

85. Clearly intensive monitoring for unassisted or low-risk caseloads is unrealistic and would withdraw funds from priority caseloads. Still, there are good possibilities for targeted periodic, rather than ongoing monitoring. The South Africa (urban) programme for example is carrying out a widespread survey in order to create a reliable and comprehensive baseline. Although such a survey is high investment, its maintenance is relatively low. Likely areas of risk can be identified and mini-monitoring surveys periodically carried out to check if conditions have changed.

86. Developmental objectives at any rate cannot be achieved by UNHCR alone. Measuring impact, as opposed to performance, typically not only means the longer term impact of a programme but also relates to goals that generally encapsulate many more factors and interventions than that implemented by a single agency[54]. UNHCR Sierra Leone's repatriation programme is built on the premise of building other (UN and government) actors into its longer term plans, recognising that it will

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[50] Fedde Groot, Refugees in urban areas (South Africa)

[51] MOU UNHCR-UNICEF

[52] Executive Committee Conclusions, Voluntary Repatriation (No. 40 (XXXVI) - 1985)

[53] UNHCR Manual on Self-reliance, Employment and Microfinance. 1997

[54] For example as well as "the totality of..effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended" OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (April 2001) states impact is "also interpreted as the longer term or ultimate result attributable to a development intervention (RBM term); in this usage, it is contrasted with output and outcome which reflect more immediate results from the intervention".

not necessarily be present to monitor and measure impact in the future, but others there with long term development goals may be.

87.   Partnership is a means of increasing coverage for non-camp contexts, finding a balance between the depth of geographically demarcated monitoring with the breadth and potential superficiality of national-level monitoring by government and rapid (interagency) assessment.

Recommendations:

➢ Build on alliances with in-country development agencies and further promote inter-agency monitoring (and assessment) initiatives (see also Chapter 4)

➢ Use examples of best practice in the field to promote cost-effective innovations such as rigorous but periodic (rather than continuous) monitoring for low-risk caseloads, including establishing good baseline data

➢ Ensure that (self-reliance) programmes include realistic monitoring plans that fall within the capacity of existing staff skills and time

UNHCR's value-added through synthesis and integration

88.   How are staff to combine the different qualitative and quantitative techniques and translate them into a coherent monitoring approach? Qualitative, quantitative, contextual? No one approach should gain ascendancy as UNHCR continues to develop its tools.

89.   The SGBV incidents, particularly in Nepal, sent a clear message that even if good monitoring of assistance was taking place, this was no guarantee that UNHCR and its partners would be aware of the full range of protection concerns and vulnerabilities in the population of concern. Nor does " the fact that mortality and morbidity rate are within expected and acceptable standards .. imply that services are offered in a culturally appropriate and acceptable way, taking into account the dignity of the beneficiaries"[55].   Each complements and cross-checks the other, often compensating for weaknesses in another approach.

90.   Whilst this paper argues for some improvements in terms of the tools at staff's disposal, it also strongly argues that a dynamic combination of different approaches is more likely to lead to a genuine understanding by UNHCR of the protection and welfare status of the refugees. Achieving this synthesis is truly an added value by UNHCR. Such integration and synthesis must lie in the hands of field managers and a team approach to monitoring.
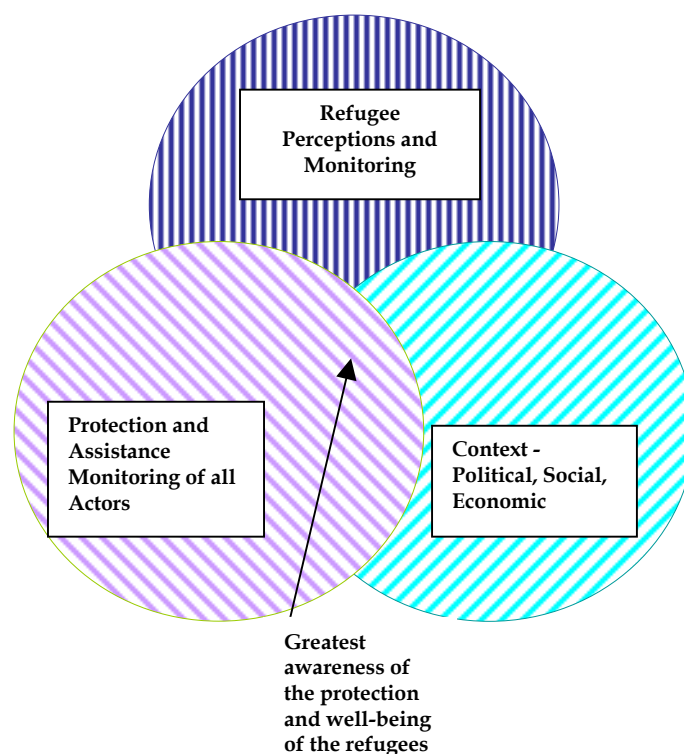
Partners and monitoring

91.   Other agencies monitor. When examining most of UNHCR's monitoring tools, one could be forgiven for assuming that it is UNHCR staff who are designing the monitoring mechanisms and collecting the information. Yet nearly half of UNHCR's

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[55] From Health, Food and Nutrition Toolkit: Quality of Healthcare Services in Refugee Situations: Qualitative Survey on Refugees' Perception

voluntary funds are disbursed through implementing partners (IP)[56] and most of the monitoring of assistance, and a good deal of the monitoring of protection is carried out by them.

Figure 2

Refugee Perceptions and Monitoring

Protection and Assistance Monitoring of all Actors

Context - Political, Social, Economic

Greatest awareness of the protection and well-being of the refugees

92.   UNHCR's reduced "market share" in the face of increases in official funding of bilateral humanitarian programmes largely at the expense of the multilaterals, means that UNHCR must adapt to a monitoring context over which it has less control and a greater need for partnership[57].   The integrated and synthesised approach discussed above and in Chapter 4 are a key to UNHCR's added-value in the humanitarian context and essential for the agency to retain and regain its credibility.   This significant component of UNHCR's monitoring capacity is discussed in *Monitoring with and through partners* in Chapter 4.

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[56] EPAU Evaluation of UNHCR training activities

[57] According to DAC/OECD figures and internal UNHCR figures, official bilateral funding has gone up 150% in recent years, compared to a 32% increase to the multilaterals; UNHCR's budget has gone down 33% since 1994.

Stage 2.   Collecting the information

How is the data collected?

93.   Much of the monitoring information on the protection and welfare of the refugees is collected by partners, particularly implementing partners, and obtained by UNHCR staff through reports, particularly the sub-project monitoring report (SPMR), site visits (considered one of the most important methods by UNHCR), co-ordination meetings and informal and formal contact with partners including government. Information is also collected through direct contact of UNHCR staff with the refugees, be it formally through planned mechanisms such as refugee committees, meetings with refugee leaders, open-day advisory sessions and participatory techniques such as focus group discussions. As mentioned, informal monitoring may well constitute the larger part of UNHCR's staff monitoring.

94.   Other sources can be from the region, Geneva and from secondary sources such as national research organisation and government information. Some information is passed by radio and telephone at regional and national level, particularly regarding population movements in emergencies and during repatriation.

95.   As mentioned above, UNHCR's planning tool, the Hierarchy of Objectives, does not have a column that describes *how* the indicator information is to be collected (called the "Means of Verification" (MOV) in a standard logframe). Although the resulting simplicity is a rational strategy to facilitate absorption in the field as its use becomes more widespread, there are consequences for monitoring.

96.   The MOV makes the "how" of collection integral to planning and helps ensure that resources (participatory or survey skills, time, computer software etc) are made available for it. It also helps ensure that the selected indicators are realistic. There are fewer tools available to help staff know how to collect the data, particularly using qualitative techniques and advice on process (an exception is the Health, Food and Nutrition ToolKit[58]).   The absence of MOV in the UNHCR logframe may inadvertently reinforce the gap between advice on what to collect and how.

97.   Several, though not all, of the sectors include template forms for data collection, though this is mostly true of the technical sectors where forms and advice are found in the ToolKits and the Handbook[59]. They do not necessarily collect the same or all of the information included in the *Practical Guide* or the *Core Set*. This is not surprising as the guidelines are being developed at different times and are being updated constantly. Recent work on developing quantitative indicators in both Education and Community Services will make creating forms to record this numerical and binary information much easier; at present staff are left to design forms or other recording media themselves and hence the formats will tend to vary for each operation.

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[58] Quality Of Healthcare Services In Refugee Situations. Qualitative Survey On Refugees' Perception. (ToolKit)

[59] e.g. the Health Information System, Food Monitoring Forms, on-site and post distribution monitoring checklists and forms, nutrition survey and malnutrition measurement guidelines and so on. Where greater information is needed, users are referred to relevant manuals, but most of the data collection requirements related to the monitoring of expected indicators are provided

98. To a large extent this is inevitable. Contextual differences and individual preferences lend themselves to adapted or innovative models. Feedback from the field suggests that even where formats exist, individuals are either not aware of them, or are motivated regardless to create their own. This suggests the need to find a balance between providing and promoting templates whilst supporting appropriate adaptation to context, particularly as the latter increases ownership - and therefore use.

Recommendations:

➢ Template collection forms should clearly show what is mandatory, to enable analysis and comparison across the organisation, but permit additions according to country programme need.

➢ UNHCR should retain the simplicity of its two-row log-frame design in its hierarchy of objectives but should re-insert columns showing the means of verification (and as recommended above, indicators for assumptions and risks) to remind planners of how the planned objectives and outputs are going to be monitored. An example matrix based on a WFP model is below[60]:

Logframe element	Indicator	Means of Verification			Means of analysis		Use of information	
		Data Source	Frequency of Collection	Responsibility for Collection	Data base	Narrative base (summary and inference)	Report type	By whom
Objective Assumptions and Risks								
Output Assumptions and Risks								

99. This matrix is a proposal, not a fixed model. It is fully recognised that UNHCR's internal assessment of its absorption capacity may consider that the added complexity of re-introducing such factors would be counter productive. Nonetheless, the implications of their absence should be carefully considered by UNHCR and their inclusion at a later date planned for.

Who collects it in UNHCR?

100. Virtually all UNHCR's job descriptions include monitoring as a responsibility. Essentially Protection and general Field Officers and Assistants have the most direct responsibility for "close monitoring" of refugees and on-the-ground implementation of programmes. Programme Officers are responsible for dealing with overall programme implementation including verification and monitoring of implementing partners at SPMR level. Sectoral Co-ordinators (e.g. WatSan, Food and Nutrition, Community Services) often engage at all levels within their sector, liaising with implementing and operational partners, relevant government departments as well as monitoring directly through field visits.

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[60] WFP M&E Guidelines 2003

101. Representatives, whilst having overall responsibility for programme effectiveness, engage particularly with collecting monitoring information on the operating context at government level, keeping abreast of political, social and regional trends and risks. They are also responsible for ensuring the analysis and use of monitoring information.

102. Two particular challenges face UNHCR with respect to who collects information for monitoring purposes:

- The expertise required to collect the information of a specialist nature

- The reliance on partners, particularly implementing partners, for field-level monitoring and hence variable access to that information:

Expertise

103. Sectoral staff in Geneva repeatedly point out that generalists cannot meaningfully monitor the quality of a technical programme. As each sector has only a handful of specialists in the field[61], in their absence the (generalist) Field Officers and Assistants are most often responsible for checking on progress and approaching partners with feedback from refugees. This fact, combined with the overload on the field staff [62] who monitor all sectors, means that at best, only basic output-orientated data collection is possible on a regular basis. In other words, the Field Assistant can record if a latrine is built and even measure its distance from a dwelling, but cannot be expected to monitor whether the latrine is appropriately built (quality of construction, cost effectiveness, safety etc) and, as importantly, if it has contributed to a change in sanitation behaviour and thus improvements in health amongst the population through regular use and maintenance - the impact.

104. NGOs interviewed during this evaluation consistently stated that monitoring of technical programmes by generalists was of limited value and greatly welcomed specialist advice and support.

Recommendations:

➢ Technical programmes need technical specialists to carry out anything but basic performance monitoring; generalists cannot provide quality assurance

➢ UNHCR should seriously consider its capacity to be accountable for specialist programmes if it cannot support such programmes with appropriate numbers of skilled staff

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[61] for example there are 3-4 Food and Nutrition Coordinators, 5 Environment, 5 Health and similarly limited numbers in other sectors. Education, though accounting for 4% of UNHCR's budget, spends 0.1% on education staff. Headquarters generally has one sectoral specialist each with a global remit

[62] This and other management-related issues are fully discussed in Chapter 5, "Monitoring and the UNHCR Management Environment"

Access to timely information

105. Questions have also been raised at to whether the frequency of the SPMRs (typically twice a year for performance reporting, 4 times a year for finance) is adequate to support UNHCR's monitoring needs, either in terms of its communication needs to other stakeholders or for timely corrective action. Field visits are an additional source; nonetheless, physically visiting a programme is only recommended on receipt of the SPMR narrative report on performance (i.e. twice a year) and "at least once a year" for financial reporting. Operations with many implementing partners could even be hard pushed to meet this demand.

106. It appears that offices find alternative means to supplement the SPMR; this is further discussed in the paper on monitoring with partners, Chapter 4. Interestingly, although a common Headquarters view is that even basic performance data is often missing, others express the view that the information is in fact available and that collection is not the problem. The problem rather is the quality, the absence of analysis and the way it is communicated.

107. In October 2002, in the process of developing the *Core Set* of indicators PCOS requested feedback from field operations. The feedback from some 40 countries showed considerable variation in the availability of basic information needed for monitoring. However, many of the proposed indicators were apparently readily available (e.g. school enrolment, number of kilocalories, under-five mortality, shelter space per person etc) and reasonably frequent (e.g. roughly monthly). Other indicators were much less commonly known, for example the percentage of food aid sold or exchanged and the number of meals per day eaten by the refugees. Data on urban refugees and returnees is consistently poorly reported.

108. What conclusions can be drawn from this? Firstly, there is a possibility that this is as good as it gets - those operations with the weakest monitoring may be less likely to complete the questionnaires and hence caution is needed.

109. It is tentatively suggested that:

- In around 40 operations, there is a reasonable availability of information on a number of the core set of indicators

- However, data requiring higher levels of surveillance and contact with the refugees is less likely to be collected (for example the health data more commonly available would be readily available from health partners and some clinics, however, the number of meals per day and % of food sold are impact not output indicators. Reporting against impact indicators implies greater direct observation and contact with the refugees and, in the case of food sold, monitoring of markets and household level surveys

- UNHCR's monitoring of dispersed populations such as returnees is limited

- It is similarly low for urban refugees, whether due to incapacity or due to a tendency not to monitor because limited or no material assistance is being given

110. Some of the above weaknesses in monitoring clearly do not relate to tools and mechanisms for monitoring - they primarily relate to resources and overall capacity -

an absence of partners, rather than poor monitoring of partners. However, what is also implied is limited levels of direct field contact between UNHCR staff and the beneficiaries (knowing how many meals a day), or of additional monitoring perhaps not already carried out by partners (e.g. monitoring in the town markets). This is consistent with views expressed in interviews and field trips that senior staff do not visit the field sufficiently, that data collected by junior staff is not communicated or analysed and that UNHCR frequently lacks resources to commission its own monitoring. Recommendations regarding these and other management issues are discussed in Chapter 2.

Stage 3.   Analysis
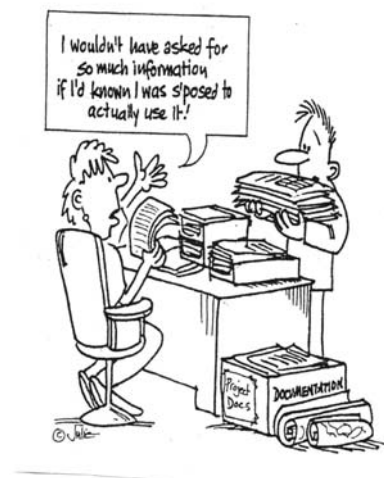
Source: Sphere Project, Training Module 3

Analysis refers to the process by which information collected is translated into a management tool for response and corrective action. It therefore incorporates both the manipulation of the data (e.g. quantitative information in a database) and the process of attributing meaning to it.

111.   As a global organisation, UNHCR needs a system that combines the technical capacity to analyse the information collected and make it readily available for all users at all levels in the organisation, as well as the "soft" capacity of staff skills and time required for staff to have the chance to make intelligent use of the data.

112. Firstly, this would mean a database capable of manipulating the sort of information collected by UNHCR and its partners, discussed in Chapter 2. It is crucial that decisions about what is being monitored are in harmony with how it will be analysed and vice versa. Equally important is ensuring that the collection and analysis are designed on the basis of what the users - at every level on the organisation - want and in what format.

113.   This does not appear to be clear at present. Concerns are expressed about lack of information; they are also expressed about too much information. As the bulk of monitoring information is presented in narrative form (either in the SPMRs or internally through UNHCR's reports), it is difficult to extract trends, progress and comparisons, fundamental to monitoring. A database has the potential not only to improve data manipulation but can also be designed to serve the information needs of different levels in the organisation. At present, prioritising information is a lengthy task. So is extracting it. One of the consequences of this is the constant

requests for ad hoc reports. What is needed is a pyramid approach to information, with the (ever reducing) data variables specified for each level[63].
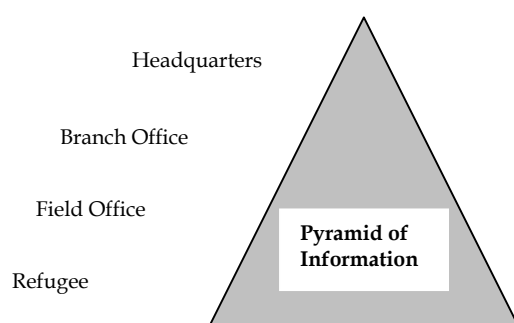
114. Carrying out an audit of the information needs, use or purpose of the monitoring information throughout the organisation would greatly facilitate the design of the entire monitoring system, bringing greater clarity regarding what to collect, methods of analysis and communication media. It would also clarify accountabilities. It is recommended that a mini-audit is commissioned, sampling representative views from the main internal and external stakeholders with a clear stake or claim on monitoring information about refugees.

115. For the databases to be effective, staff need the skills to use them and to be at least aware of how the data they collect will be input and analysed. The *Core Set* would benefit from clearer instructions on how to report data. The *Practical Guide* encourages a recording of information that is not always easily manipulated in a database (e.g. users would have to work out how to express "x latrines with locks per family/person in Y locations" as an apparently single variable which is actually a composite of several data entries.

116. Of equal if not greater importance is making intelligent use of the data. Feedback on the *Core Set* did not include analysis or proposed action[64]. There is a risk that the story being told by the data is not being heard. Geneva's analysis of the feedback, for example, points out cases of low malnutrition despite adequate food rations (hence is the food being sold for other essential non-food items?) or adequate nutritional status despite low rations (indicating the possibility of alternative coping strategies)[65]. The former could even point to protection risks and corruption - the point is that using the data by analysing its meaning is essential. Otherwise monitoring is redundant and, some would say, irresponsible since it gives a false impression of accountability and security.

117. Similarly, capturing and analysing qualitative information gleaned from structured or informal monitoring is particularly challenging. This type of information does not lend itself well to a database. However it can still be analysed

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[63] One prototype database offered by EESS is the *Development of a standardized GIS Database in the Water Sector* which aims to meet the monitoring information needs of different stakeholders at each level in the organisation by designing a hierarchy of data which generates three different levels of detail for field, country and world (Geneva needs for global comparison), all based on the same raw data from the field.

[64] The respondents were not requested to provide evidence of what they proposed to do with the information and hence the tendency evident in some of the feedback to omit an explanation of *Why* or *What Next?* does not necessarily mean that no action by the country office is intended

[65] Laura Lo Castro: email response to DOS/PCOS Validated PCOS Core Set of Indicators

and is an essential component of monitoring. Advice to staff on how to analyse and communicate qualitative information would enhance UNHCR's monitoring considerably[66]. It should be used in conjunction with quantitative data.

118. Senior management in Geneva must take the lead on ensuring that the various initiatives in design of planning tools and databases ensures coherence and compatibility between each stage from the type of data collection to how it is analysed and subsequently communicated and used.

119. The more accessible the information is, the easier it will be for managers to identify performance and protection issues, question findings and improve programmes. Accessibility means good communication tools.

Recommendations:

> Carry out a mini-audit with "key informants" representing each level within the organisation to determine, specifically, what information they require. This would include, for example, how many indicators and how much narrative is appropriate to their job purpose. A worked example of the analysis and communication of such quantities and types of data could then be produced to test the appropriateness for each stakeholder.

> Responsibilities for the analysis of data must be clarified and relevant staff given training, support and time to identify and understand the story being told by the data - trends, anomalies, hypotheses

> Include in proposed guidelines on monitoring, how to analyse and communicate qualitative information

Stage 4.   Communication

120. The narrative report remains one of the key methods of formal communication in UNHCR. Partners report through the SPMR, offices use SitReps throughout the chain from field assistant to Representative and Bureaux. As shown in Figure 1 above, there are some thirteen types of standard reports as well as less formal methods of communication; many interviewed complained that fulfilling regular reporting demands paled to insignificance when compared to the need to file ad hoc reports on subjects, sectors or issues of special interest to the organisation and its donors. In addition, the reporting formats are only loosely related to the monitoring information content and purpose suggested by each sector's guidelines[67].

121. The extent to which the reporting formats suit the needs of the users is discussed further in Chapter 2. A key question is whether the report formats are an efficient and appropriate medium for conveying information to users throughout the organisation.

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[66] for example how to scan for repeated themes in a focus group discussion; how to extract key points, how to compare and cross check qualitative data with quantitative

[67] See Chapter 5. SitReps ask for main developments and emphasise problems, they do not refer to progress against programme objectives and therefore a link to indicators and standards. Easily solved by the inclusion of the type of logframe tables now introduced to the COPs but at present not encouraged by the current Sitrep format.

122. Based on the work already carried out by DOS and DIP in developing indicators or within their forthcoming plans for further development of monitoring tools, users could indicate, for example, how many indicators they would like to see reported, ranging from the full set for a specialist in the field, to extracted priorities for field generalists covering technical areas, through to reduced quantities (or different selections in some cases) for other users through the country and Headquarters. Narrative information could be similarly requested or excluded.

123. This report cannot propose the ideal format as it is crucial that the needs of the users themselves are first established; the design then follows.

Stage 5.   Using monitoring information

124. There are many reasons not to monitor. Several relate to difficulties regarding tools and mechanisms as described here, others are the result of management and organisational issues which relate to wider constraints regarding funding, staff skills and availability, the demands on the field for reports and responses to emails and weak accountability that calls into question the purpose of monitoring. These and other issues are discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

125. Although theoretically motivated by a desire for improved programme quality, monitoring in UNHCR appears to be dominated by a narrower interpretation of accountability - the pressure to report. Although there are doubtless countless cases of programme adjustments made by UNHCR and its partners in response to monitoring information, the bulk of the examples communicated to the evaluation team and found in secondary documents are those which demonstrate an inability to respond.

126. A sense of scepticism prevails that perceives it to be pointless to communicate shortfalls with respect to standards and objectives because the cause is beyond the control of the programme (physical, such as limited groundwater, or resource-related such as lack of staff or funding)[68].

127. Other factors are equally influential as constraints to action. In many cases UNHCR is more than a few steps away from the beneficiaries, relying on the partner to react. They too may not have the capacity. The HAP in Sierra Leone found that "In many instances where HAP raised problems, the agencies concerned were themselves already suspicious of their local partners. … The problems lie in the weaknesses of their internal response mechanisms, something which they feel unable to address without stronger commitment to accountability at higher levels (e.g., by shifting resources to the employment of more protection or monitoring officers)[69].

128. Knowing and not acting is frustrating and places staff in a morally difficult position. If countries are providing good monitoring information that demonstrates shortfalls to globally recognised standards, recognised by UNHCR, the

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[68] " The whole exercise seems theoretical and might not yield expected results in the absence of relevant/adequate funding prospects. There is evident disconnect between the funding situation and the use of standards. Why should we waste our time in embarking in such an initiative?" Strategic Planning Workshop in Africa, Integration Of Standards And Indicators In Operations Management. 2002

[69] HAP Evaluation 1st trial Sierra Leone

organisation's senior management has a moral responsibility to the populations of concern and to its staff to demonstrate an appropriate response through resource allocation, lobby donors or defend its inaction.

129. Staff demotivation as a result of poor funding and the political failure of impartiality is understandable. That said, sub-standard work is not always related to funding and providing credible, objective monitoring information in globally accepted terms is a more powerful advocacy tool with which to approach donors and a step towards an impartial form of resource allocation trusted by all stakeholders. [70]

130. Further, UNHCR's mandate and international position means that it has the responsibility to mobilise political, not just financial capital. Monitoring provides the data for this too.

Recommendation:

> ➢ Promote the full range of monitoring uses to support advocacy and impartial resource allocation based on need

Monitoring with modest ambition

131. One premise for the undertaking of this evaluation is that improvements in monitoring systems and reporting in recent years have not improved and may have even led to a reduction in staff's knowledge of the refugees[71]. This evaluation cannot determine whether this is true of the majority of the programmes or not (the Sierra Leone and Zambia field visits indeed implied that field and protection assistants at the very least had highly regular contact with the refugees), but fully acknowledges that workload is normally high and monitoring, of all types, takes time.   Tools must be simple and the number of indicators kept to a bare minimum[72]. Just the main monitoring tools at present propose a total of 406 assistance indicators[73]. This does not include all those on protection from DIP and additional ones from the *Core Set*, the Global Appeal 2003 indicators or cross-cutting monitoring tools such as the draft set on the Five Commitments (which alone total 103 indicators) or those in the *Practical Guide* where Sectoral guides also exist.

132. Even with full staff capacity and resources, would an Office be able to collect, analyse and respond to this number? Sierra Leone, regarded as innovative and strongly committed to monitoring has established a simple system for collecting

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[70] Describing the lack of proportionality to the scale of need, a current ODI study comments that there is "an apparent lack of trust within the system. Put crudely, donors do not trust agency needs assessments; and agencies doubt that a concern with objective needs assessment is central to donor decision-making" ODI Study: *Preliminary Findings Paper: Measuring Humanitarian Need* February 2003

[71] ref TOR: " UNHCR staff seminar, titled 'Why do we know so little about refugees… and what can we do to learn more?"

[72] Understanding and applying analytical models such as logical frameworks is difficult enough. Staff may feel that knowing how-to monitor would be a good start, never mind knowing what to monitor. Interestingly, the CSU research found that the highest ranked indicator was one proposing that a "common tool .. for conducting comprehensive situational analysis should be used in all refugee situations to assess above areas [of analysis]" (Wofford)

[73] From the sectoral guidelines for Community Services, Education, Health, Food and Nutrition, Environment and, for Water, Sanitation and Shelter, from the *Practical Guide.* Not including indicators for Self Reliance, currently revised.

monitoring information from partners working in the camps. This is based on a total of nineteen indicators, relating to 9 key standards covering six sectors.

133. Whilst no fixed model can be proposed, the Sierra Leone example and the *Core Set* feedback do suggest that ambitions for monitoring should be modest. Finding a balance between the ideal amount of information needed and what is realistic is a critical challenge for UNHCR which will always generate tension. Concerns are rightly expressed about reduced sets of indicators such as the *Core Set* which risk, through over simplification, formulating a specious argument. Worse, the added status attributed to apparently meaningful data neatly expressed in bar charts and tables could be dangerously misleading.

134. There is no simple answer to the perfect - but unused - versus the quick and much too dirty approaches, but the *Core Set* is a laudable start. More work is being done on how to capture the most representative indicators whilst at the same time being realistic. It would be useful if the indicators in the sectoral guidelines were prioritised and linked to the *Core Set* - by the technical staff themselves, not by generalists or reluctantly under pressure - in recognition that in many cases it will be generalists collecting the information who can only give limited time to each sector (an example is the ToolKit's *Monitoring Report Food and Food Related Issues WFP/UNHCR* which lists 8 (impact) indicators).

Recommendations:

135. Each sector could "ground truth" the minimalist *Core Set*, by comparing the status of the refugees they describe with the results of comprehensive monitoring using a wider set of indicators with the same caseload. Testing the degree to which the core set correlated with the picture of in depth monitoring would help to develop the indicators over time and to establish the degree to which they give a limited, but representative picture.

136. Finally, combining different methodologies to monitoring (i.e. quantitative, qualitative and contextual information and a mix of approaches) will partially compensate for a rough and ready approach in any or all of them - focus group discussions with women about water would tell staff a great deal about access, quantity and personal security at the water points to complement measurements of distance and quantity.

Culture of learning or fear?

137. Monitoring is partly about learning from mistakes in real time. It was often stated during this evaluation that UNHCR staff are afraid to communicate problems, for fear of being blamed. One analyst of the *Core Set* feedback commented that "Many of the respondents have preferred to maintain silence regarding the standard" in contexts where, it is implied, the standard is clearly not being met. Good news reporting, prompt responses to emails and demands from senior managers are perceived to be rewarded; uncovering difficulties is not. If monitoring is to be anything more than an additional box-ticking burden, then managers need to generate a culture in which learning is rewarded instead. The process of monitoring

can itself make explicit the real causes; it exposes poor performance but also exposes the constraints.

138.   There are also positive process spin-offs from monitoring. Built into a jointly planned programme cycle, monitoring becomes the glue that keeps the team together through sharing information and relating the impact in one sector to another. Contrary to the tendency to expect bad news, monitoring will also show the progress and results - seeing trends and progress over time can be very motivating in a working context that has no apparent end in needs. It also maintains a shared vision and partnership with other actors. If the refugees are active participants in the monitoring, it can raise self esteem through taking responsibility and managing the same constraints.

Staff issues

139.   These are discussed in detail in Chapter 5, Monitoring and the Management Environment in UNHCR. Those particularly raised in the assistance sectors mostly associate with the low numbers of qualified technical staff in the field. There will always be a tension between the need of the agency to be accountable for and therefore able to monitor the performance of partners against arguments for saving money. Poor performance may not be identified by generalists until a crisis occurs; corrective action in the shape of informed instructions, advice and coaching even less likely.

140.   Most Headquarters technical staff interviewed said that sectoral monitoring only happened if a dedicated specialist was assigned to the programme. Counter arguments to more staff for quality assurance focus naturally on cost; UNHCR could easily end up spending as much on technical staff as its implementing partner. No one is proposing that very small programmes have a full complement of technical staff; however the decision should not be ad hoc. Could there not be a rule of thumb ratio between programme budget and specialist staffing needs? Staff gave examples of considerable costs incurred through (understandably) poor monitoring and planning by generalist staff in significant technical projects or of high expenditure in one sector (such as health) resulting from poor quality in another; recording these - costing them - would again be an objective and therefore powerful advocacy tool.

141.   UNHCR's Protection, Operations and Support (POS) section has undertaken to identify benchmarks for determining the number of protection staff needed in a particular situation. Without adequate numbers of skilled staff, UNHCR is unable to fulfil its responsibilities for quality control.

Recommendation:

> ➤ Each sector should develop a set of criteria in order to propose a rough ratio of specialist staff to programme size

Integration

142.   A striking characteristic of the monitoring tools from all sectors is their blissful ignorance of each other. This is most true of what is often referred to as the cross-

cutting sectors. As described in Chapter 4: *Monitoring in the Protection Sector* the myriad protection concerns expressed in the guidelines of DIP are duplicated, yet separate from, those of Community Services, SGBV and so on. How many of the 103 indicators in the current work on monitoring the 5 Commitments are found elsewhere? Sectoral specialists are increasingly aware of the protection dimension of their work. Guidelines have been produced showing the links between food and non-food distributions and sexual exploitation,[74] shelter indicators advocated as protection issues, not only comfort or privacy.

143. The tendency however appears to be to create new and separate guidelines, rather than to integrate and mainstream, leaving Community Services as the torch-bearers for cross-cutting protection issues in the field. This in no way suggests that discrete guidelines are unnecessary, particularly when part of the objective is to raise awareness. However, integrating protection concerns into assistance indicators or making existing assistance indicators gender and child sensitive would reduce the monitoring workload and optimise the absorption capacity of a busy sectoral specialist. It would also be compatible with the direction taken by the Sphere project.[75]

144. Only senior management can make this happen. At present both DOS and DIP propose to create field guides for standards and indicators to use in monitoring. The PCOS current proposals are far reaching and concern the entire organisation; they should not be left unsupported and un-integrated. That "broad in-house consultation to ensure that the focus and purpose of the use of standards in UNHCR is well understood and supported by senior managers across the organisation"[76]is fundamental to success. With initiatives occurring separately, senior coordination with authority that transcends divisional territory is essential to support the tough decisions necessary to move forwards with an agreed set of standards and greater integration[77].

145. Current proposals for the creation of review groups, including representatives from the field to feed into a Standard Oversight Committee on which the directors of DOS, DIP, Division of Communication and Information (DCI) and EPAU sit, along with the Assistant High Commissioner (AHC) and the Deputy High Commissioner (DHC) is an encouraging development that can only be echoed by this report. This could bring in the wider issues associated with monitoring, such as including process and qualitative issues, and shaking off the important but restrictive association of the PCOS initiative with resource allocation. It would be a pity if the opportunity were missed to build on this initiative and link the proposed consolidation of standards with other initiatives that could enhance analysis and communication.

146. That would require overall leadership from the Assistant and Deputy High Commissioners, to ensure that territorial concerns are transcended and senior level

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[74] *Potential links between food aid, distribution of relief items and sexual exploitation and proposed preventive/remedial actions. HCDS UNHCR*

[75] Seven "Cross Cutters" have revised each sector of Sphere to ensure that they incorporate protection, disabled, gender, aged, environment, children and HIV/AIDS

[76] UNHCR Memorandum 19 June 2003 from the Chief of PCOS to the Director of DOS

[77] Revising the Sphere guidelines has taken one year, involved 35 countries, over 2000 participants; more than 500 comments on the proposed revised versions were also received from more than 2000 website downloads (source, Nan Buzard)

coordination able to mesh the multiple demands on the system from all parts of the organisation.   Meantime, it is recommended that representatives of the divisions tasked with data analysis and communication (such as to donors) are also invited on the committees feeding into the Standards Oversight Committee and hence decisions taken about what sort of information is collected are shared with developments in successive phases of the MSRP.

Conclusions

147.   There is a lot of motivation in various parts of UNHCR to increase its capacity to monitor meaningfully. Faced with funding cuts and the challenge to demonstrate its impact and to advocate on behalf of the refugees, it is essential that the energy in the many monitoring initiatives already under way is captured and coordinated by senior management.

148.   More pressing than the important but minor improvements needed in the design tools for monitoring is the (related) need for an overview of the whole cycle of monitoring that takes the purpose of monitoring, and particularly the specific uses made of its information by different stakeholders, as its starting point.

149.   This clarity appears to be startlingly absent and is urgently needed to enable all relevant divisions and levels in the organisation to ensure that the design, collection approaches and formats, analysis and communication tools are coherent and compatible, not only internally but in the way they interface with the monitoring systems, language and discourse of UNHCR's main partners.

150.   It is also necessary to ensure that the prolific outputs of planning and policy documents related to monitoring are integrated, one with another, with specific attention being paid to the mainstreaming of the main relevant protection indicators throughout the assistance sectors. Once defined, whether by audit or through an existing consultative mechanism, tough decisions regarding scope and scale and the much needed developments in the analysis of quantitative and qualitative information can really make progress.

151.   It is essential that no one type of monitoring gains ascendancy over another; this is particularly so given the greater ease with which quantitative data can be analysed and communicated and the resulting risk that other, equally important information is lost and a misleading picture conveyed. Equally, since existing guidelines tend towards an unwieldy quantity of data that invoke their own redundancy, this evaluation strongly supports efforts made in PCOS to seek out the absolute minimum of information required to present a "good enough" picture of the status of the people of concern to UNHCR and the humanitarian community as a whole.   It is recognised that the *Core Set* does not meet field monitoring needs; however most tools for specialists lean too far in the opposite direction and hard compromises are needed. This can only be done by UNHCR sectoral specialists.

152. Efforts to work less in isolation and more in partnership with other UN agencies, NGOs and government and the refugees themselves are encouraging. Joint efforts to find methods of shared and coordinated monitoring would help consolidate the policies. There is a degree of confusion about the best role of UNHCR with respect to its implementing partners, with staff caught between

mandated responsibilities and issues of trust and capacity and the ready availability of appropriate monitoring information. Considerations must be given to developing the skills of staff to better monitor the partners and make better use of its resources. The importance of investing in staff skills and professional competence remains a theme throughout this evaluation.

153. UNHCR can create a particularly value-added monitoring role by developing and promoting an integrated approach to monitoring that encompasses the analysis and perception of the refugees, a sound understanding of context and a clear presentation of quantitative data. The resulting synthesis feeds directly into its mandate and optimises its position as a global agency with an essential coordination role to play.

154. Ultimately the ability of UNHCR to monitor effectively rests on the organisation promoting a management culture that rewards learning by doing and promotes transparency regarding shortcomings.

Key recommendations

Management:

➢ Senior management should take on the leadership of developing an integrated and coherent monitoring system

➢ Reward monitoring (e.g. through its inclusion in performance objectives)

Tools

➢ Carry out a mini-audit of the information needs of the users of monitoring, sampling representative views from the main internal and external stakeholders with a clear stake or claim on monitoring information about refugees.

➢ In the proposed continued work on the consolidation of standards (coordinated by PCOS) common agreement must be obtained on its formulation of standards and indicators and related language and all guidelines subsequently streamlined accordingly

➢ The decision should take close account of the current developments in management information systems (i.e. the Management Systems Renewal Project MSRP) to ensure that the data being collected is compatible with proposed analytical tools

➢ Find ways to incorporate Sphere in its use of core standards and indicators (by for example using Sphere indicators for the technical sectors unless otherwise specifically negotiated with an implementing partner

➢ Prioritise indicators in specialist guidelines to create an intermediate level of indicators (between PCOS *Core Set* and the full set available for technical staff). This should preferably be done in a consultative manner with the field

(as with Community Services recent research), or at least with key field specialists

➤ Aim for the <u>absolute minimum</u> number of indicators necessary to adequately monitor; in the field. Test the reduced sets against comprehensive monitoring in the field to ensure that they present a good enough picture of protection and well-being. This could be done opportunistically (i.e. if a partner is carrying out extensive monitoring against a larger set of indicators, simultaneously test a core set to compare results)

➤ mainstream protection and special concerns such as gender and children into all sectors

➤ Include ways in which to involve the refugees in monitoring as part of the new guidelines

➤ Consider the tools as components of the entire project cycle, ensuring coherence and providing guidance for each stage

➤ Operationalise context-monitoring (possibly through re-introducing the assumptions and risks column into the logframes)

➤ Develop the "how" of monitoring: more advice on techniques. Consider re-introducing the Means of Verification column into the logframe, or other checklist for collection and process

Staff:

➤ Develop a rough ratio of numbers of staff to programme size per sector, and use as a benchmark

➤ Target a trainer of trainers approach in the field for on-the-job coaching in monitoring

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Chapter 4.   Monitoring in the protection sector

1.   As explained in 'The Protection Framework' found in Chapter 2, UNHCR is mandated to provide protection to refugees and others who the General Assembly has asked the UNHCR to assist. The right of refugees and others of concern to physical security and the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights lie at the core of this protection mandate. In fulfilling this mandate, UNHCR engages in myriad activities ranging from legal advocacy to the provision of material assistance. UNHCR's monitoring activities associated with the latter, largely undertaken by programme officers, technical and field staff, is examined in Chapter 3, 'UNHCR's Monitoring Cycle and the Assistance Sector'.

2.   This paper essentially carries the examination further, reviewing the monitoring activities of protection officers, community services staff and women and children specialists in what is loosely referred to as the 'protection sector', the focus of which is to ensure refugees and others of concern have equal access to and enjoyment of rights accorded to them in law. [1] This includes interventions in the following areas; access, registration, non refoulement, refugee status determination, voluntary repatriation, detention, security from physical assault and/or exploitation and legal redress for the same, liaising with national authorities to ensure compliance with international protection obligations, legal institutional capacity building, resettlement, family tracing and reunification, and ensuring the particular needs of refugee women and children are addressed.

3.   Monitoring is a key to UNHCR's mandate because, as discussed in Chapter 2, monitoring provides UNHCR with information necessary to plan its programmes, assess their impact, improve performance and inform others on the state of the world's refugees. Monitoring occurs at two main levels. One takes place at Headquarters and is focused on monitoring core protection issues at the country level in order to: report back to Ex Com; seek state compliance with the international protection regime; inform donors and other external actors of protection concerns and improvements; and to ensure that legal protection principles and guidelines are being followed in all UNHCR operations. The second principle level of monitoring occurs at the field level and its primary focus is on collection and analysis of information relating to the protection, rights and well-being of refugees in order to intervene to protect against rights' infringements, to assess the impact of UNHCR projects, and to modify and/or design projects to best meet the protection needs of refugees and others of concern.

4.   As described more fully in Chapter 3, 'UNHCR's Monitoring Cycle and the Assistance Sector', UNHCR organizes its activities in the field by sector. Within a country operation, each programme is designed according to a set of objectives, which are formulated at the sectoral level. All sectoral interventions are informed by UNHCR's protection mandate[2], and effective monitoring requires coordinated action by programme, technical, protection, community services, and other field staff.

5.   Monitoring in the protection sector involves situation monitoring (e.g. changes in country conditions likely to precipitate a rise in asylum applications) as well as performance (e.g. number of refugee status determinations (RSDs) made in a fixed period). It also involves monitoring quality (asylum seekers receive guidance and

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[1] For more on the relevant bodies of law that inform UNHCR's protection mandate see Chapter 2, 'The Protection Framework'

[2] Ibid.

advice on the procedure) and impact (increase in the number of asylum- seekers who have access to RSD procedures.) Like monitoring in other sectors,[3] to be meaningful monitoring in the protection sector requires a mix of measurable indicators (e.g. # of incidents of SGBV) as well as qualitative ones (% of women and girls who feel safe). Although similar in that regard, systematic monitoring in the protection sector tends to be more complex than monitoring in other sectors due both to the wide range of issues that need to be canvassed, as well as the difficulty in arriving at measurable standards and indicators. Both render the issuing of clear monitoring guidelines and reporting mechanisms a challenge not just for UNHCR but for other organizations that also have a protection mandate.[4]

6. Like all monitoring, effective protection sector monitoring depends not just on knowing what to monitor, but equally on knowing how best to collect the necessary data, having the capacity to do so together with the ability to analyse it and mechanisms to properly record an usefully report on information received. If these are in place, monitoring should lead to enhanced performance – pointing to where programmes and projects should be modified to provide more positive impacts.

7. In our research we encountered a high degree of consistency of opinion, both from UNHCR staff, donors, partners and external evaluators, on current impediments to effective protection monitoring within UNHCR operations. These include infrequent senior staff and protection officer engagement with refugee populations, in part due to shortages of protection officers, excessive reporting requirements and ad hoc requests for information from headquarters and other UNHCR offices that keep staff desk bound. Other obstacles to effective protection monitoring include perceptions that 'protection' concerns are only under the purview of protection staff with the result that the protection dimension of all interventions are not adequately factored into country plans. Related to this is the absence of integrated programme planning that includes delineation of monitoring responsibilities among staff. As well, current protection monitoring tools and reporting formats have yet to prove effective in supporting the systematic and targeted collection of protection sector information. [5]

8. This paper examines the background to the above observations by first examining who is engaged in protection sector monitoring. It follows with an examination of the tools available to assist monitoring within the protection sector and concludes with a summary of suggestions at enhancing UNHCR monitoring within this sector.

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[3] See Chapter 3, 'UNHCR's Monitoring cycle and the assistance sector'.

[4] See discussion of ICRC in Chapter 7, 'Monitoring in other agencies'.

[5] Similar observations also made in the following evaluations: Meeting the Protection Needs of Refugee Children: An independent evaluation of the impact of UNHCR's activities' (May 2002); 'UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines for their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of their Implementation (May 2002); The Community Services Function in UNHCR: An Independent Evaluation (March 2003). Hereafter referred to as the Evaluation on Refugee Children, the Evaluation on Refugee Women, and the Evaluation of the Community Service Function respectively. See also Evaluation of UNHCR's Repatriation and Reintegration Programme in East Timor, 1999-2003, hereafter referred to as the East Timor evaluation.

Monitoring the protection sector at Headquarters

Department of International Protection

9.   The Department of International Protection (DIP) is one of five departments of UNHCR. Its primary functions are to set standards for the protection of refugees and others of concern and to ensure those standards are consistently applied in UNHCR's operations. The DIP also promotes the principles of protection and seeks State support and compliance with the international protection regime. In regard to monitoring, four of the five sections of the DIP have monitoring related responsibilities. [6]

10.   The Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section (PPLA) is responsible for monitoring the application of the law, as well as developing the law, issuing guidance and advice to UNHCR (headquarters and Field offices) and other external actors (states, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non governmental organizations (NGOs). The PPLA closely follows developments in national and international law regarding refugees and others of concern to UNHCR. It monitors and seeks to influence national legislation as well as regional standards and international norms.

11.   The Protection Operations and Support (POS) section monitors the application of the law to ensure that is appropriate applied and followed in UNHCR operations. The POS supports field offices by disseminating best practices, reviewing protection activities, providing advice and tools to assist Bureaux to mainstream protection policies and standards into their operations. It also conducts oversight and investigation missions often in collaboration with the Inspector General's Office.

12.   Oversight and inspection missions have revealed several weaknesses in UNHCR operations that have a direct bearing on monitoring. One relates to shortages in protection staff that have had serious consequences in some operations where UNHCR was not aware of persistent rights violations. [7] Moreover, last year the Inspector General observed that: procedures for communication and consultation with urban and camp based refugees were still in need of improvement; country offices continue to face gaps in available data on their refugee caseload which had to be addressed through improved registration systems; protection strategies were becoming a priority in strategic plans, however, efforts should continue to be made to dispel the notion that 'protection' is confined to protection staff. One way suggested to do so is through more extensive protection training to staff and partners.[8] The latter recommendation is one that, for reasons discussed below, we fully support. [9]

13.   The Protection Capacity Section (PCS) also has responsibilities related to monitoring in so far as its training activities regarding protection interventions in the field emphasize the need to be aware of the situation of refugees through regular

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[6] The fifth section of DIP, the Protection Information Section (PIS), does not have monitoring responsibilities; rather it provides UNHCR and others with country and legal information and analysis.
[7] UNHCR, 'Observations from IGO Missions Implementation and Proposals for Policy Considerations' (March 1999 to March 2002), point 11.
[8] Ibid., points 6-8, 10, 12.
[9] Discussed more fully below under 'Training'

monitoring.[10]   Moreover the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Unit within PCS develops guidelines for RSD and coordinates and monitors RSD programmes in the field. [11]

14.   Similarly, the Resettlement Section (RS) of DIP develops resettlement policies, sets and disseminates standards for resettlement, and monitors their application to ensure consistency.

Department of Operations

15.   Bureaux Legal Advisors Monitoring in the protection sector also takes place with the regional Bureaux that coordinate all UNHCR's regional activities, provide support to country offices and ensure that UNHCR policies are followed in the field. Each of the five Bureaux has at least one legal advisor who monitors country operations to ensure that UNHCR protection policies are followed in the field.   They provide the Bureaux and the staff of country and field offices with advice on all aspects of international protection, guided by the work of DIP to ensure uniform application of protection principles and policies.

16.   The Office of the Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Women (Refugee Women and Gender Equality Unit- RWGE Unit) is responsible for providing advice and guidance to headquarters and to the field on how to ensure that the resources and needs of women are fully addressed in UNHCR's field activities. The RWGE Unit has three staff in Geneva and two regional advisors in Africa.

17.   The RWGE Unit engages in a number of monitoring related activities. Its work in the development of guidelines, reporting formats, training and workshops support the monitoring function.   In particular, the RWGE Unit is currently working on revisions to the 1991 Guidelines on the *Protection Of Refugee Women*, and has contributed to the recently released *Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response* (SGBV Guidelines).[12]   It has also conducted, with DIP, regional workshops and training exercises on gender protection issues, part of which highlight how field staff should monitor and what they should be attentive to when they are assessing the situation of refugee women. Through field visits, review of country office reports and consultations with refugee women, the RWGE Unit works to keep abreast of developments in the field, which it reports on to donors, ExCom, ECOSOC and the General Assembly on items related to refugee women and gender equality.

18.   Two years ago the RWGE Unit engaged in an ambitious monitoring and analysis exercise that actively engaged refugee women. It organised a series of regional consultations with refugee women, culminating in an international meeting

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[10] This is particularly true of its Protection Learning Programme (PLP). The need for management accountability for regular staff engagement with refugees and others of concern is one component of the Protection Management Workshop (PMW) recently piloted by PCS. Both are discussed more fully under 'Training' below.

[11] The RSD Unit manages the RSD project, which deploys experienced consultants to UNHCR field offices to advise and assist in RSD. It also t conducts RSD training and has developed a procedural standards guide provide greater consistency and oversight in UNHCR's RSD programmes world-wide. Discussed under 'Procedural Standards for RSD Determinations' below.

[12] UNHCR, May 2003. discussed more fully below under 'Guidelines Relating to refugee Women and Children'

of refugee women in Geneva. The purpose of the consultations was to get a better understanding of the experiences of refugee women and how UNHCR could better support them. [13] This work was helpful in informing the Office's priorities regarding refugee women, later expressed in the High Commissioners five commitments to refugee women and the *Agenda for Protection*.[14]

19.   The Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children (Refugee Children's Co-ordination – RCC Unit) provides advice and guidance to UNHCR operations to ensure that the needs and rights of refugee children and adolescents are addressed in all UNHCR programmes in the field.   Like the RWGE Unit, the RCC Unit's monitoring related functions include field-focused training and support to initiatives aimed at identifying and addressing specific issues of concern to refugee children. It also assists in the development and dissemination of guidelines relating to refugee children, include resource material on assessment and monitoring of their situation and needs.   The RCC Unit visits field operations and provides regular progress reports on UNHCR's activities relating to refugee children.

20.   In the course of its work, the Unit has identified a number of problems associated with monitoring the well-being of children. Some closely parallel the concerns expressed about monitoring refugee populations more generally and include: lack of front line staff, no clear accountability at the field level for monitoring the welfare of children and too much time spent by programme and protection staff responding to e mails, making reports and going to meetings. The Unit also sees a need to build capacity in the Bureaux to effectively analyse data from the field and to ensure that children's issues are mainstreamed. [15]

Monitoring the protection sector in the field

International staff

21.   Protection Officers.   UNHCR has 700 protection posts.[16] A study of protection staffing conducted for DIP three years ago, identified sixty-nine protection related post titles.   These ranged from, for example, Assistant Regional Representatives (Legal and Protection) to Field Officer (Legal and Protection). Given the wide variety of protection posts, it is difficult to state concisely the qualifications protection staff must have or precisely what protection staff do. It inevitably depends on the office and the responsibilities assigned to the particular post. For example, in regard to qualifications, standard UNHCR job descriptions of Senior Protection Officers, Protection Officers, Associate Protection Officers, and Assistant Protection Officers, indicate that the former two should have an advanced degree in law and the latter a

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[13] The results were published in *Respect our Rights: Partnership for Equality*: *Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women* (Geneva: 20-22 June 2001), 2001.

[14] These were made by the High Commissioner in December 2001 and include: ensuring the participation of refugee women in all management and leadership committees; registering refugee women on an individual basis, and providing relevant documentation; developing strategies to counter sexual and gender-based violence; ensuring direct participation of refugee women in the management and distribution of food; and supplying sanitary materials to all women and girls in need of such materials.

[15] April 2003 meeting with Christina Linner, Coordinator of the Refugee Children's Unit.

[16] Number provided by Shelly Pitterman, Head, Human Resource Service of the Division of Human Resource Management (DHRM).

university degree in law. In practice, however, some protection officers have neither.[17]

22.   Whether a law degree is required for a post depends on the functions the person is expected to perform in it. It may therefore be necessary for those who are required to interact regularly with the courts, draft or comment on legislation, provide refugee law training or supervise lawyers.[18]   Regardless of whether the position requires legal training, however, an overarching requirement of protection staff is that they be fully informed of the legal standards and treatment to be accorded to refugees and others of concern and to work to ensure that they are respected in practice.

23.   Broadly stated this involves engagement on four fronts:

i.   ensuring that government authorities are aware of their responsibilities to ensure the security, safety and well-being of refugees and work with the authorities to see that these responsibilities are met. This includes responding to and/or taking action in the event that rights are violated by state and non state actors;

ii.   working with other programme and technical staff to ensure that applicable protection standards are reflected in programme activities;

iii.   working with refugees to ensure that they are aware of their rights, that they are consulted in programme planning and monitoring their situation so as to be able to intervene where necessary to protect their rights; and

iv.   pursuing durable solutions (e.g. voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.)[19]

24.   Not every protection staff person is involved to an equal degree on all four fronts. But all protection staff must be aware of the broad protection responsibilities that fall within the protection sector. It is also the case that in offices where there is only one protection post, all the aforementioned activities may rest within the responsibilities of that staff member.

25.   One of the competencies required of protection officers (known as 'functional competencies') is that they provide principled and effective responses to problems affecting the rights or legal status of refugees and others of concern.[20] Among the indicators of the fulfilment of this responsibility is that, in consultation with their colleagues, they monitor 'through field visits all aspects of protection including provision of basic needs (i.e. housing, education, nutrition etc) in camps and refugee hosting areas.'[21]   Other indicators include working with protected persons to 'develop timely practical solutions to particular protection problems' and co-

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[17] DIP was not aware of the proportion of 'protection' staff that did not have law degrees, nor was this information available from the Department of Human Resources.

[18] Communication with Laurens Jolles, Chief POC, June 24, 2003. POS is in the process of redefining the criteria for protection post.

[19] Information found in standard job descriptions for protection staff.

[20] UNHCR, Career Management System *CMS Information: Competencies and Typical Jobs,* pp.17, 209 (PT02) see also 208, 210-14

[21] Ibid. 209

ordinating with other UNHCR staff to identifying 'vulnerable groups and individuals, and in particular women and children', and developing 'concrete initiatives to ensure that their specific protection needs are addressed.'[22]

26.   As noted earlier, a frequently cited reason for insufficient protection monitoring at the field level is that many operations experience a shortage of protection staff. In his March 2002 report, the Inspector General observed that in 'some operations, particularly those facing major operational protection challenges, key protection posts remain unfilled for months, or posts did not exist and were being discharged by inexperienced staff, UNVs and project personnel without proper functional support, or not being discharged at all.' As a result, 'UNHCR's ability to protect refugees was suffering.' [23] The situation persists. For example, in Uganda UNHCR has three professional protection staff (1 Senior Protection Officer and 2 JPOs), to cover over 200,000 refugees. According to statistics provided by DIP, there were 28 protection posts that were vacant at June 2003, 60% of which were in Africa.

27.   The number of vacant posts only represents the number of current post unfilled and does not represent the number of posts required to meet to protection needs of country operations. In 2002, the Africa Bureau and DIP conducted an assessment of protection staffing requirements for Africa and concluded that in addition to filling the then current vacancies of established posts, over 150 additional protection posts would have to be created. The staff and budgetary implications of this spurred interest in examining how to best determine the protection staffing needs of a programme.   To that end, POS has undertaken to identify benchmarks for determining the number of protection staff needed in a particular situation, their function and applicable grading category.[24]

28.   One of the Inspector General's recommendations to help remedy the protection staffing shortages was to revise the required professional qualifications.   In particular, he suggested that the requirement of a legal background be reviewed and more flexibility introduced to broaden the pool of internal candidates for such posts.[25] POS is currently undertaking such a review.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] UNHCR, 'Observations from IGO Missions Implementation and Proposals for Policy Considerations' (March 1999 to March 2002) See also the observations in the East Timor evaluation. According to the evaluators, the repatriation and reintegration programme there suffered from inadequate staff numbers (including chronic understaffing of UNHCR's protection function), frequent staff turnovers and confused reporting lines. These shortcomings combined with the absence of an information base and integrated protection and material assistance interventions, contributed to the lack of systematic and effective post-return monitoring. See footnote 7.

[24] It is interesting to note in this regard that a recent report from the United States General Accounting Office was critical of the UNHCR's process for allocating staff positions based on available resources and broad operational plans rather than on the protection needs of refugees. The GAO observed that UNHCR's distribution of protection posts was not consistent with the risk level and the caseload of the refugee setting. "Specifically, high risk countries in Europe have 22 per cent of the protection posts but only 4 percent of UNHCR's assisted population. GAO, 'Humanitarian Assistance: Protecting Refugee Women and Girls Remains a Significant Problem', Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, May 2003.

[25] UNHCR, 'Observations from IGO Missions Implementation and Proposals for Policy Considerations' footnote 23. This was also recommended in the 2000 DIP study, 'Protection Surge – A Study on Protection Staffing and Recommendations'.

> ➤ We support the development of benchmarks for determining protection staff requirements of country offices and the introduction of more flexibility into the protection qualifications profile.

29.   Community Services Staff.   UNHCR has two Community Services staff members at Headquarters who support the work of approximately 100 community services staff in the field, most of whom are national staff. This relatively small cadre of staff, whose numbers have been reduced in recent years, have wide-ranging responsibilities including ensuring that refugees have access to basic physical, social and economic entitlements and as well as helping to improve the capacity of refugees to meet their own needs.   As the recent evaluation of the community services function documented,[26] frequently community services responsibilities in this regard overlap with protection staff, and a lack of clarity in the relative responsibilities of each is one factor that impacts negatively on monitoring within the protection sector.

30.   In addition to the absence of coordinated action, the evaluation also concluded, that while monitoring the situation of refugees is central to the fulfilment of UNHCR's protection mandate, monitoring tends to be focused more on measurable outputs (delivery of plastic sheeting for shelter) and measurable status indicators (levels of communicable diseases) and less on situations (appropriateness of plastic sheeting) and impact (inappropriate shelter materials contributing to increase incidence of communicable diseases).   For the evaluators, this reflected an insufficient attention in planning to the local context and a lack of situational analysis. [27]

31.   UNHCR has recently issued a response to the findings and recommendations of the three evaluations on Community Services, Refugee Women and Refugee Children. A number of the Office's planned initiatives should address some of the problems associated with monitoring the well-being of refugees. For example, in the face of imposed reductions on post creations, UNHCR has committed itself to ensure that 'positions of community services staff are maintained and that, as far as possible, community services posts in key operations are reinstated over the coming years.'[28] It is also committed to developing a UNHCR situational analysis tool to be field tested and piloted in a number of countries.[29]   To strengthen a joint approach to protection needs of refugee women and children, UNHCR has said it will also promote the establishment of multi-sectoral teams in all Branch offices and field offices, as a replacement for the more traditional approach of appointing a focal point for refugee women and children.

> ➤ We encourage UNHCR to require a multi-sectoral team approach in all its Branch and country offices, not just for issues pertaining to the protection of women and children, but also for all aspects of programme planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment.   Monitoring responsibilities among staff should be clearly identified.

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[26] *The Community Services Function in UNHCR: An Independent Evaluation*, March 2003. See footnote 5.

[27] Ibid, pp. 40-41

[28] 'UNHCR Response to the three Evaluations/Assessment of Refugee Women, Children and the Community Services Function', June 2003, p. 8.

[29] Discussed below under 'Community Services'

32.   Senior Office Managers.   The responsibility for ensuring that protection officer's and other staff members perform their functions ultimately rests with senior managers (Representatives, Heads of Office, senior protection officers) as the High Commissioner reminded the Office last year in a memorandum precipitated, in part, by the revelations and subsequent investigation of fraud in the RSD and resettlement activities of one of its country offices.[30] Managers were encouraged to ensure a clear management and accountability framework is in place for protection activities. This includes oversight and appropriate direct management from Representatives and Bureau with support of DIP, regular monitoring and effective control of protection activities by senior protection officers, and effective systems for ensuring access to UNHCR offices and security of files. Among the manager oversight techniques that was highlighted in the High Commissioner's memorandum was for each senior manager to meet directly with refugees, 'not only in periodic planned meetings with refugee representatives, or refugees seeking access to field offices, but on a random basis wherever the refugees may be.' [31] As well, protection officers were reminded that in addition to understanding prevailing UNHCR policies and instructions, 'they must also have first hand knowledge of refugee populations.'

33.   Given that monitoring is so much a part of what protection staff and managers are required to do, the failings in this regard are not due to a lack of clarity in their job descriptions.   A repeated refrain from many of those we interviewed was that ultimately it is up to managers to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to planning and implementation, and ensuring staff are aware of their monitoring responsibilities and held accountable for the same. Offices said to have a relatively good record of monitoring were ones where the manager took these responsibilities seriously and acted on them. This was an observation also born out of the field studies of the Children's evaluation. [32]

National staff and external deployments

34.   Protection Surge Capacity Project (Surge Project) . Although UNHCR has not yet implemented structural solutions to improve protection staff gaps in the field, it has implemented short-term responses. One is through the Surge Project, a joint initiative of UNHCR and the US Department of State.[33] It is designed to meet temporary gaps in protection staffing by deploying experienced protection professionals[34] selected by International Rescue Committee (IRC) and approved by UNHCR, to UNHCR field offices. The Project is managed within DIP by POS. POS

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[30] 'Management of Protection Activities – Responsibilities of UNHCR staff' IOM/FOM 25/2002 15 March 2002

[31] Ibid. p. 3

[32] There it was noted that offices where the protection needs of children had been successfully operationalised were ones were senior management provided leadership and support, protection and community services staff integrated their work and staff were held accountable for monitoring.   The evaluation on refugee childrfen, see footnote 5.

[33] The project has been fully funded by the US Department of State. Other donors have expressed an interest in supporting the project next year when the US contributions are to fall to 25% of the project's funding requirements.

[34] The minimum requirements for inclusion in the Project Surge Roster are: two years of experience in legal or protection work on behalf of refugees and/or others of concern, university degree preferably in law or human rights; excellent knowledge of the international legal framework and fluency in English or French. IRC, 'Surge Project Fact Sheet'

liases with field offices to determine where project Surge deployments are necessary and decides the professional profiles required to fill them. It then facilitates in co-ordination with IRC, the selection, briefing and deployment of personnel with the bureaux and the field offices. All those deployed through the Surge project are under the supervision of UNHCR.[35]

35.   Surge project deployments are intended to respond to new or additional protection activities. These can arise for many reasons including, for example, by a sudden influx of refugees, deterioration in the protection situation in a camp, or the implementation of a registration campaign.   The Surge project is not intended to be used to provide staff for emergencies, resettlement, or refugee status determination, which are met through other means in the Organization. [36] The length of the average Surge project deployment is approximately six months and cannot exceed ten months because the Project is not intended to be a permanent substitute for UNHCR's staffing needs. Since the project began in January 2002, 52 deployments have been made to UNHCR field offices throughout the world. [37]

36.   RSD Consultants. Another deployment project involves using external staff for refugee status determination (RSD).   RSD is a very time intensive process, the demands of which cannot be met by UNHCR international staff. To address this problem, UNHCR relies on locally hired staff, many of whom are United Nations Volunteers (UNVs)[38], selected by UNHCR and paid by the UNDP programme.   In 1999, UNHCR initiated the RSD project under the supervision of the PCS of DIP to provide operational support to its field offices. Since its inception, the RSD project has hired 45 specialized consultants, experienced in RSD[39] to support its RSD operations in UNHCR offices throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

37.   Initially the RSD project consultants were deployed to do refugee status determinations and thereby reduce the growing backlog of RSD claims. However, they also have been active in helping to develop and implement standard operating procedures, measures to reduce the waiting periods of asylum seekers to the RSD process, and staff training programmes. According to PCS, RSD consultants have provided much needed advice, training and oversight and have strengthened the capacity of offices to perform the RSD protection function fairly and efficiently. However, as a consequence of the organization–wide cost reduction exercise, DIP has to cut by 50% its RSD budget for 2004.[40] This leaves DIP with concerns about its ability to meet and maintain acceptable standards in this core protection function.

38.   Resettlement Deployments. We understand that the Resettlement Unit also uses external staff in its field operations. At the time of writing this paper, however,

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[35] Although Surge staff are required to have a minimum of two years refugee protection experience, they are briefed by IRC prior to being deployed, and are provided with a CD developed by IRC that contains the main protection related instruments as well as other pertinent UNHCR protection guideline documents.

[36] The staffing needs during emergencies are covered through EPRS deployment schemes. RSD and Resettlement staffing needs are covered by the RSD and Resettlement projects within DIP.

[37] Total deployments for this fiscal year (September 2002-September 2003) are expected to meet the targeted projection of 36.

[38] Some UNVs are also recruited internationally.

[39] According to PCS many RSD Consultants have worked in national RSD operations and in UNHCR Field operations for many years.

[40] Even with this ceiling there is no guarantee yet of funds to meet it.

we had not yet received a response to our requests for more information on their activities. We are hopeful that information will be forthcoming before our report is finalised.

39. Community Services Officers. UNHCR has stand-by arrangements with several NGOs, for the deployment of community services officers. Its principal partners in this regard are Save the Children Norway and Sweden. It also has an informal arrangement with CARE Netherlands. In the context of emergencies, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Danish Refugee Council have provided community services deployments for UNHCR operations.

Partners

40. The importance of effective partnerships with NGOs and other implementing agencies is frequently stressed in UNHCR protection training materials, operational management guides, and in UNHCR's *Agenda for Protection*[41] and *Global Objectives*.[42] UNHCR relies on its NGO implementing partners (IPs) for most of the services provided in camp, rural and urban settings. They are often the main contact points for refugees through their implementation and management of UNHCR projects. The information gathered by IPs in the course of their activities, including information communicated by refugees, provides an important and often essential basis for UNHCR protection monitoring.

41. There are a wide range of protection –related activities undertaken by NGOs and other national and international agencies who are not in contractual relations with UNHCR but who are also implementing programmes. The breadth of these interventions was clearly illustrated in the feedback provided to PCS from UNHCR staff that have participated in its Protection Learning Programme (discussed below). The respondents highlighted the many protection related activities that NGOs are engaged in addition to their work in food, health, education and income generation. These include: the provision of legal information, counselling and representation to refugees and internally displaced person (IDPs); dissemination of country of origin information for RSD decision-makers; facilitating the registration of refugees; helping persons of concern obtain documentation; identifying separated children; family reunification activities; work in the area of prevention and response to SGBV; fact finding and monitoring missions in border areas, to refugee homes and to closed institutions.

42. The principal tool for informing partner's protection monitoring is *Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs,* a joint NGO/UNHCR publication, which grew out of the Partnership in Action Process (PARinAC) process. [43] In addition to raising awareness of protection issues, *A Field Guide* contains practical and concrete advice on the actions NGOs can take in response to protection problems as a component of their existing programmes. It also envisages a clear monitoring and advocacy role, which is broader than the protection issues associated with or generated by

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[41] A/AC.96./965/Add.1 of 26 June 2002.

[42] UNHCR, *UNHCR's Global Objectives and Indicators of Progress*, Global Appeal 2003, page 8.

[43] Published in 1999. It is also the reference manual for the Reach Out project discussed below.

assistance programmes.[44]   UNHCR's operations reference tool, *Partnerships: An Operations Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners*, identifies *A Field Guide* as the basis for cooperation and protection at filed level'

43.   UNHCR is aware of the importance of partners in meeting the protection needs of refugees, as illustrated in the 'Monitoring with and through Partners' (Partners paper), Chapter 6.   While the role of partners in monitoring is also frequently acknowledged, the need to better coordinate with partners and provide clear guidance to IPs on the protection information needed by UNHCR, was raised with us and also noted by the Inspector General in his 2002 report.[45]   This issue is canvassed in more detail in the 'Partners' paper noted above.

44.   There are already several current and proposed initiatives that indicate progress in this regard, in addition to the development *A Field Guide*. These include training of UNHCR staff on the importance of partnership[46], the proposed operations protection toolkit for use of UNHCR and NGOs (described below), and joint strategic planning exercises, that involves a delineation of monitoring responsibilities among UNHCR and other agencies. An example of the latter is last year's joint strategic planning exercise in Kenya. UNHCR, NGOs and other partners, jointly designed a country plan on the basis of the needs of the beneficiary population and one based on the availability of resources. The exercise revealed the gaps between what needed to be done and what could be done given the level of available resources.   It also helped coordinate UNHCR and NGO interventions in the field and to arrive at a common and shared strategy for monitoring.[47]

> ➢ We recommend that UNHCR evaluate the Kenyan joint planning exercise undertaken with its NGO partners for possible application to all UNHCR operations.

Monitoring tools for the protection sector

45.   UNHCR does not have a standard guide to field based protection monitoring of the rights and well being of refugees. What it does have are manuals, planning documents and protection training programmes that inform the monitoring function. However, with the exception of the returnee monitoring guide, discussed below, none of these materials have a section which focuses exclusively on monitoring in the protection sector setting out, for example, what to look for when monitoring, how to best go about it, and how to effectively report on findings for follow-up and action.

Planning documents

46.   General Planning Documents. UNHCR has a number of planning guides that are covered in 'UNHCR's Monitoring Cycle and the Assistance Sector', Chapter 3.

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[44] For example, 'lobby governments for timely and fair refuges status determination' procedures', and monitor 'for rights abuses as part of assistance programmes.'

[45] 'Observations from IGO Missions Implementation and Proposals for Policy Considerations' (March 199 to March 2002), points 7 and 8.

[46] Exercise 2.2 of the Protection Learning Programme (described under 'Training" below).

[47] The Kenya exercise is specifically acclaimed in the NGO Statement on Programme and Funding made to the Standing Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (27 Meeting), 24-26 June 2003.

These include: 'Project Planning in UNHCR: A Practical Guide on the use of Objectives, Outputs and Indicators" (the Practical Guide', March 2002); UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies; 'Effective Guidelines for UNHCR Teams' (January 1999); Participatory Planning in UNHCR: A Practical Guide (January 2002); People Oriented Planning framework (POP)[48] and the UNHCR Manual Chapter 4, sections 4.1-4.4.   While all of these guides refer to protection issues, the most comprehensive protection planning guidance is found in the Protection Checklist document discussed below.

47.   Protection checklist.   The most comprehensive and informative protection planning document is the DIP publication, 'Designing Protection Strategies and Measuring Progress: Checklist for UNHCR Staff' (Protection Checklist).[49]   This 35-page document sets out the goals for day-to-day protection work in UNHCR operations from the beginning of an emergency until durable solutions are found.   It is a rich document, drawing on policy and principles canvassed in UNHCR's many publications and guidelines.   It highlights the protection issues that should be of concern to all staff in planning their activities, suggests activities for achieving desired protection goals and sets out indicators to measure progress.[50]

48.   The document is divided into four sections, corresponding to different stages of the displacement cycle.   The first looks at protection issues arising in emergencies and camp situations.   The second focus on the proper treatment to be accorded refugees in asylum situations.   The third examines protection concerns in implementing durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration) and the fourth examines building a legal framework in partnership with civil society.   In each section, desired end results are explicitly set out, concrete activities to reach that result are suggested and indicators of progress are specified.   So for example, under the first section, one desired end result is that security related concerns in mass influx situations are identified and effectively addressed at an early stage.   There are then twelve detailed activities suggested, one of which is that a suitable number of qualified staff are deployed to the field including female staff, female interpreters and community services workers to monitor the situation and to identify protection problems.   There are then eighteen indicators of progress, including 'refugees are no longer rejected at the border' and 'protection needs of groups with special needs are identified and addressed in a protection and assistance framework from the initial stage of the emergency'. [51]

49.   The Protection Checklist is essentially a management planning and implementation tool that highlights the protection concerns that must be addressed in the Office's multi-sectoral day-to-day activities.   Its focus is wide, extending not just to the work of the protection sector but also to the activities of other programme

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[48] The POP is a longstanding training tool for mainstreaming a participatory and gender-sensitive approach into programme planning and delivery, which is to be revised in 2003.

[49] IOM/43/2002-FOM/41/2002, of 26 July 2002.

[50] Branch Offices are also asked to describe how their actions and those of the government have furthered the six strategic goals contained in the Agenda for Protection Programme of Action. These are: 1)   Strengthening implementation of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol; 2) Protecting refugees within broader migration movements; 3). Sharing burdens and responsibilities more equitably and building capacities to receive and protect refugees; 4). Addressing security-related concerns more effectively; 5) Redoubling the search for durable solutions; 6) Meeting the protection needs of refugee women and refugee children. A/AC.96./965/Add.1 of 26 June 2002.

[51] IOM/43/2002-FOM/41/2002, of 26 July 2002 p. 4.

and technical sector staff. To be effective, therefore, it requires broad awareness of its content among senior staff and management direction to ensure that the document is used as an integrated planning and measurement tool.

50.   Its practical use for other staff, however, may be somewhat limited in that it is a very long document which, although it addresses the protection priorities associated with given interventions and suggested activities to meet them, does not provide guidance to what the relative responsibilities of different staff functions should be in that regard. It is one of the reasons why the Community Services evaluators suggested that the Community Services unit at headquarters extract from the checklist a core set of 'Protection Strategies and Progress Measures' that would pertain explicitly to its role and areas of responsibility. [52]

51.   Perhaps because of its length and breadth of focus, and because it was issued by the Director of DIP, so may have been perceived incorrectly as a document of relevance only to protection staff, very few of the Bureaux or field staff we interviewed were aware of the document.[53] Even among those who knew of the document, including those within DIP who had read it, very few could recall it in sufficient detail to comment on its potential effectiveness.

52.   We note that when the Protection Checklist was issued, the accompanying memorandum from the Director of DIP indicated that DIP was considering issuing the Protection Checklist in a user-friendly booklist format and welcomed practical suggestions. From a monitoring perspective, we think much of the content of the document could be used for a field guide to monitoring (discussed more fully under 'Returnee Monitoring Guidelines' below), since by identifying protection concerns and indicators of progress, it helps to inform staff what they should be looking for when the monitor in the field.   To be of practical use in this regard the material would have to be packaged in a more accessible format.

53.   Moreover, we believe that to be effective, such an initiative would require the support, collaboration and endorsement of the Department of Operations and not exclusively be promulgated by DIP given that the guide should multi-sectoral in focus and application.   In addition, it should be coordinated with other related initiatives, such as the Programme Coordination and Operations Support (PCOS) section development of standards and indicators, the UNHCR situational analysis tool being developed by Community Services, returnee monitoring guidelines being drafted by POS, and the proposed protection toolkit, all of which are discussed more fully below.

> The Protection Checklist is a very valuable document in that it clearly sets out the protection priorities that must accompany UNHCR interventions. To be operationalised it requires the support of the DHC and AHC and their direction to senior managers that the Protection Checklist should be used in programme planning, implementation and monitoring.

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[52] See footnote 5, Evaluation of the Community Services Function, para 256.

[53] This can lead to duplication of effort and increase the volume of guide documents sent to the field. For example, a recent useful Checklist for Gender Mainstreaming (February 2003) by the Bureau for the Americas was drafted and issued without regard to the DIP Checklist, the desk unaware of the latter.

> ➢ The content of the Protection Checklist should be incorporated into a generic monitoring guide. (discussed below)

Protection-related manuals and guidelines

54.   Protection Handbook.   According to the Chief of POS, the most comprehensive source material for protection sector monitoring is the three volume *Protection Manual*, published and recently updated by PPLA.   The Manual is a compilation of key legal and policy documents organised by theme.   These include detailed principles, policies and guidelines concerning the meaning and application of the refugee definition as well as information and guidance on issues such as extradition, social and economic rights, registration, smuggling, migration, location of camps, registration, durable solutions, burden sharing, statelessness, internally displaced persons and special protecting needs of women, children, and the elderly.

55.   Recently nearly 500 copies of the Manual were distributed to UNHCR offices worldwide. Although it is an available reference tool for all staff, because its focus is primarily legal, it is of most relevance to senior management and protection staff. This together with size and breath of content renders it impractical as a guide to monitoring, which it is not intended to be.

Community Services manuals

56.   Community Services have a series of four manuals, intended to be key reference materials for community services staff, much like the Protection Manual is for protection staff.[54] A review by the evaluators of the Community Services function led them to conclude that these manuals were out of date and in need of urgent revision.   They also concluded that a UNHCR specific situational analysis[55] tool needed to be developed.   The latter recommendation is consistent with other evaluations that found that UNHCR programmes and projects were often designed on the basis of limited information about the needs of refugees and the resources and capacities of refugees to meet those needs.

57.   In response to a number of the recommendations made in the Community Services evaluation, the Community Services Unit, in the Health and Community Development Section (HCDS) of DOS, has hired a consultant to, among other things, update the community services manuals, formulate a set of training materials, and develop a UNHCR specific situational analysis tool for use in UNHCR operations. A reference group, made up of individuals drawn from different departments and sections of DOS and of DIP will provide guidance to the consultant.[56]   Given that

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[54] *Community Services: An Introduction*, May 1996, *Refugee Emergencies, A Community Based Approach*, May 1996; *Urban Refugees: A Community Based Approach*, May 1996; *Working With Unaccompanied Children: A Community Based Approach,* May 1996.

[55] The Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC) provides a useful definition of situational analysis as a process of 'systematically gathering information, identifying the main problems and needs within a refugee population, identifying the principle resources contained within the population, and analysing the information gathered in order to facilitate the process of planning in a systematic, strategic and integrated manner.'

[56] 'Terms of Reference: Consultant for Community Services', UNHCR Geneva Switzerland, and 27 May 2003.

aspects of the consultancy overlap with other initiatives in the office, we believe that this broad based participation is desirable.

58.   With respect to monitoring in the protection sector, we see areas of the consultant's work that touches on work that is already been done or which may be undertaken by DIP in the future, and which underscores the need to ensure wide consultation. In particular, one of the consultant's tasks is to develop 'measures to measure how protection and assistance activities contribute to protection and don't increase risks, and to identify unintended negative impact of UNHCR activities.' It strikes us that this is essentially what the DIP Protection Checklist document addresses. Another activity is develop a learning package that includes 'how to advocate for systematic effective planning, programming and inter-sectoral collaboration in the field for prevention and response to SGBV' an issue that is covered in the SGBV guidelines as well as the Protection Management Workshop and other training activities conducted by DIP.[57]

59.   Elsewhere in this paper[58], we recommend that given the importance of monitoring, DIP in collaboration with Department of Operations, develop a monitoring guide for camp situations. Situational Analysis tools would be directly relevant to such an exercise, and in particular those that focus on observation and interviewing techniques to enhance the acquisition of qualitative data.[59] The Terms of Reference for the Community Services consultant indicate that the development of this tool will require inputs from DIP and sections within the Department of Operations (including, the RWGE Unit, the RCC Unit, the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section, the Population and Geographic Data Section and PCOS). The ToR therefore clearly recognise the inter-sectoral interest and expertise that exists in support of enhancing UNHCR's capacity to conduct situational analysis and assessment.

Guidelines relating to refugee women, SGBV and children

60.   Over the last decade there have been few protection issues the subject of more policy papers, guidelines, and training materials than addressing the needs of refugee women and protecting against gender based violence and exploitation. These include, but are not limited to: 'UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women'[60]; Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women[61]; over a half a dozen guides to issues pertaining to SGBV[62]; several guides on reproductive health,[63] and training on

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[57] *Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response*, May 2003; see also the PLP and the PMW discussed below under 'Training Programmes'.

[58] Under the discussion of 'Protection Checklist' and 'Returnee Monitoring Guides'.

[59] For more on situational analysis and how it relates to monitoring, see Chapter 3, 'UNHCR's Monitoring Cycle and the Assistance Sector'.

[60] A/AC/98/754, 20 August 1990. See also the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, December 2001. The Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women are currently being revised.

[61] UNHCR, July 1991 to be updated in 2003.

[62] UNHCR, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response, May 2003 (hereafter referred to as SGBV Guidelines); 'Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Programme in Guinea', How to Guide no. 7, January 2001; 'Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Programme in Liberia', How to Guide no. 8, January 2001; Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Situations, Inter-Agency Lessons Learned

how to mainstream women's protection needs into all UNHCR interventions.[64] UNHCR also plans to issue a manual on 'Rights of Women and Children: Awareness Training for Refugees'.[65] Yet despite policy directives, guidelines, training and other measures to improve the protection of refugee women, public scandals and the observations of internal and external evaluations point to the fact that women's issues are not yet mainstreamed in UNHCR operations and sexual exploitation of refugee women and girls persists. One of a number of reasons for this is the lack of effective monitoring.

61.   The new SGBV Guidelines[66] have a chapter on Monitoring and Evaluation Systems.   However, it provides very general information about developing a monitoring system including the need for a multi-sectoral approach, and monitoring against clearly defined objectives and indicators. It is not sufficiently detailed (e.g. what questions to ask, who to ask, how etc.) to provide specific guidance to staff on how to monitor in this sensitive area.   It does provide, however, examples of reporting tools such as incident report form and a monthly sexual and gender based violence form. Should DIP proceed with the proposed Operation Protection Toolkit (see below), and in particular with designing generic incident reporting forms for use in all operations, we suggest that it incorporate the forms used in the SGBV Guidelines.

62.   Policy, guidelines and training on children's protection issues have also received special focus. [67]   The main resource for UNHCR staff is *Refugee Children Guidelines on Protection and Care*.[68] It has very little on monitoring child welfare, other than to say that it should be done and provide a list of questions for managers to

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Conference Proceedings (Geneva: 27-29 March 2001), 2001 'Monitoring and Evaluation of Sexual Gender Violence Programmes, Tanzania', How to Guide no. 6, April 2000; 'Step-by-Step Guide for Protection Officers, Prevention of and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence', 1998; 'Building a Team Approach to the Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence, Report on a Technical Mission, Kigoma, Tanzania', How to Guide no. 4, September 1998.

[63] 'Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations. A Community-Based Response to Sexual Violence Against Women, Crisis Intervention Teams, Ngara, Tanzania', How to Guide no. 1, January 1997. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Joint Programme for HIV/AIDS, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, et al., Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations: An Inter-Agency Field Manual, 1999.

[64] Protection Learning Programme, PCS, Department of International Protection, 2002; Protection Management Workshop, POS, DIP, 2003; Respect our Rights: Partnership for Equality, Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women (Geneva: 20-22 June 2001), 2001; Respect our Rights: Partnership for Equality, Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women (Geneva: 20-22 June 2001), 2001.

[65] 'UNHCR Response to the three Evaluations/Assessment of Refugee Women, Children and the Community Services Function', June 2003, p. 3.

[66] *SGBV Guidelines* above note 63.

[67] Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IRC, ICRC, Save the Children-UK, UNHCR, UNICEF, and World Vision), Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, 2003; Guidelines on Policies and Procedures Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, 1997; 'Working with Unaccompanied Children: A Community-Based Approach', 1996; Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care, 1994; 'UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children', EC/SCP/82, August 1993. UNHCR has also developed a number of checklists such as 'Integrating children's concerns into UNHCR's overall programmes and documentation, including COPs,' and the checklist on 'child protection in emergency situations.' Child protection issues are mainstreamed throughout the Protection Learning Programme and the Action for the Rights of Children CD Rom is distributed as part of the learning material. The Protection Management Workshop also with includes orientation on leadership and management responsibilities in relation to key protection issues for refugee children.

[68] Ibid.

consider when determining whether child needs assessment and monitoring is being carried out. One of the questions posed in the Guidelines for managers is whether is there are monitoring systems in place to address refugee children's protection care and needs. We did not come across any such system, and our questions to the RCC Unit regarding whether it was aware of any has not yet been answered.[69]

63.   In our investigations, the Protection Checklist was the closest attempt we found of providing a practical tool to enable staff to mainstream children's issues into programmes and to provide indicators of progress, against which results could be measured. As noted in our discussion of the Protection Checklist above, what is now needed is for the content of that document to be translated into a user-friendlier monitoring guide that draws on the situational analysis tool being developed by the consultant for Community Services.

Procedural standards for Refugee Status Determination

64.   In recent years, DIP has been made aware of serious shortcomings in RSD procedures in the field, both through the work of the consultants it has deployed through the RSD Project and the observations of the Inspector General and PCOS following from inspection and oversight missions. These have included inconsistent standards across offices, insufficient attention to due processes principles and incidents of fraud and abuse of RSD systems. In response, and to strengthen UNHCR's RSD operations, DIP has produced *Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate* (RSD Procedural Standards). This document is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of RSD procedure from the initial reception and registration of asylum seekers to the notification of final decision on appeal.

65.   From a monitoring perspective, the RSD Procedural Standards is an important document for it emphases the need for oversight and supervision by a designated protection staff person for many of the key aspects of the RSD process. These include monitoring and supervision of RSD files, RSD reception and registration procedures, scheduling of interviews and of RSD interpreters. It also stresses the need to set up a complaints procedure and procedures for reporting mistreatment or misconduct by UNHCR staff.

66.   The RSD Procedural Standards is an important step towards harmonizing RSD procedures, providing monitoring guidance and increasing office accountability. Its impact will in part depend on whether UNHCR has sufficient resources not only to follow the principled procedural steps contained with the document, which it is acknowledged will demand more in staff time, but also the monitoring and oversight necessary to ensure they are consistently applied.

Returnee monitoring guidelines

67.   The only comprehensive UNHCR protection monitoring guidelines we found[70] were ones associated with returnee monitoring of which we came across four.[71] One

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[69] Further to a written request for information on June 25, 2003, and follow-up on July 21, 2003.

[70] Not to be confused with returnee monitoring forms for which we understand that there are many field-generated forms in use.

explanation for focus on returnee monitoring guidelines may be because the Executive Committee has a specific conclusion relating to the need of the High Commissioner to be 'given direct and unhindered access to returnees so that he is in a position *to monitor* fulfilment of the amnesties, guarantees or assurances on the basis of which the refugees have returned.'[72] [Emphasis added]

68.   Of these four returnee monitoring guidelines we found, the 'Guidelines for Returnee Monitoring in Afghanistan' are particularly useful in setting out key elements of returnee monitoring in a highly accessible way. These included sections on the objectives of returnee monitoring, taking an integrated approach (involvement of protection, community services, field/programme staff and other agencies), selecting monitoring priorities, persons to be approached and how, use of returnee monitoring forms, reporting and information sharing of monitoring results and use of information to ensure appropriate responses and effective interventions.

69.   POS is presently using this document as the basis of a more generic returnee monitoring guide. Given the importance of monitoring in situations other than repatriation, and the demonstrated need for more committed structured and regular monitoring, we would encourage POS in collaboration with Department of Operations to develop a standard monitoring guide for camp situations. This would be a helpful way to bring together the rich material found in the Protection Checklist (described above), the work on monitoring in the technical sectors (described in the 'UNHCR's Monitoring Cycle and the Assistance Sector', Chapter 3) as well as the work of PCOS on standards and indicators (discussed below) into a practical field based guide for front line staff engaged in monitoring.   It may be an initiative that would fit well within the Operational Protection Toolkit, recently jointly proposed by DIP and DOS, described below.

70.   In 'UNHCR's Monitoring Cycle and the Assistance Sector', Chapter 3, it was pointed out that although UNHCR has monitoring guides for various technical sectors, there is a pressing need to rationalise the guides, streamline them by highlighting priority monitoring areas and refining them to include relevant protection issues. We do not believe a generic monitoring guide could replicate the detailed information found in most technical monitoring guides.   However, we recognise that there are many operations that do not have a full contingent of technical staff to engage in detailed monitoring of each sectoral intervention. We therefore recommend that:

> ➤ UNHCR would benefit from a practical field based monitoring guide for front line staff that addresses issues such as; the objectives of monitoring, using a team based approach, how to monitor, the use of standardised forms and how to report on and use monitoring information to enhance refugee protection. It should specify a set of priority monitoring issues (and associated standards and indicators) for each sector, including the core set developed by PCOS. Such a guide would enable the bringing together of the rich material in the Protection Checklist, the work on monitoring in the

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[71] One was developed in the context of repatriation of Rwandan refuges from Tanzania in 1998, another was for the current repatriation of Sierra Leone refugees, another issued in July 2002 related to the repatriation of Afghan refugees and another is part of the PLP unit on Repatriation and Returnee Monitoring.

[72] Executive Committee Conclusions, Voluntary Repatriation (No. 40 (XXXVI) - 1985)

technical sectors, the developments in situational analysis as well as the work of PCOS on standards and indicators

71.   In Chapter 7, 'Monitoring in other agencies', it is noted that a number of organizations such as UNICEF and WFP have developed monitoring guides accessible on a CD Rom. These guides are comprehensive in scope yet sufficiently user friendly to allow staff to access discrete units on an as needed basis. They include, for example, checklists on good monitoring practice as well as advice on how to involve beneficiaries in monitoring.

> Although we regard a more simplified guide as a priority, we would recommend that UNHCR consider the more comprehensive monitoring guides developed by other agencies to determine which type of guide best fits its operational needs and budgetary constraints.

Proposed operational Protection Toolkit

72.   In spite of all the tools, guidelines and checklists that exist, internal and external evaluations continue to observe that many field staff are not sufficiently aware of the relevant policies and guidelines, nor clear about their monitoring roles and responsibilities. Moreover, while most of the existing tools, guidelines and planning documents emphasise the need for a strategic and integrated rights based planning and implementation process[73], in practice such an integrated team-work based approach is more the exception than the rule.[74]   These observations point to the unfortunate fact that notwithstanding the enormous effort that has gone into the development of protection planning and implementation related tools, their content has not been operationalised as intended.[75]   It is also apparent that some important tools are absent, such as standardised violent incident reports and monitoring guidelines.

73.   To address these problems, UNHCR is currently considering embarking on a project to rationalize existing tools to enable them to be used more effectively, and develop additional ones, which will be contained in a single toolkit. The toolkit will not be a simple compilation of various tools but a how-to manual organised

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[73] This is stressed in the Operation Instructions and Guidelines to UNHCR Field and Headquarters on Reporting, Implementation, and Planning: 2002-2004 (IOM/73/2002- FOM 69/2002) underlines the need for close collaboration of programme and protection staff as well as Field and Community services staff and the involvement of DIP in the formulation of the Country Report (CR) and the Country Operations Plan (COP). It also contains a Strategic Management Checklist (Appendix 6) to ensure that planning processes are organized in a participatory manner and that plans are sufficiently comprehensive and reflect UNHCR's priorities. See also DOS, Operation Management Learning Programme (OMLP) and DIP, Protection Learning Programme (PLP).

[74] Leading the evaluators in the Refugee Women's evaluation to recommend the establishment of multi-sectoral approach teams in all country programmes. See footnote 5 p. 52. For similar reasons the Community Services evaluation recommended that at camp level, UNHCR should hold regular protection meetings involving all actors – including protection field, community services staff, implementing partners, local government officials and refugee to promote understanding of UNHCR's protection mandate, share information and analysis, and monitor protection problems. See footnote 5, An evaluation of the Community Services Function, p.40.

[75] These efforts also include the thought and work reflected in the OMS working papers such as 'Planning in UNHCR's new Operations Management System' 8/5/98; 'Planning in UNHCR's new Operations Management System: The Protection and Solutions Strategy' 4/6/98; 'International Protection as an Integral Part of UNHCR Operations'.

thematically to help UNHCR and NGO workers in camp situations use protection tools more effectively.[76] The toolkit, as proposed, includes guidance on how to establish mechanisms to prevent and respond to protection issues such as standardized incident protection reporting forms, standardized referral procedures, and effective monitoring systems.[77]

74. To operationalise its content in light of existing budget constraints, at this point it is envisioned that the manual will be incorporated into existing learning activities rather than be implemented through a separate training programme. To ensure full coordination of the effort, the development of the manual will be a joint DOS/DIP effort with advice from other key departments within UNHCR (Emergency and Security Service (ESS), Inspector General's Office (IGO), EPAU, the NGO Liaison Unit and the Regional Bureaux) and representatives from the NGO community.

75. The details of the proposed project were provided by DIP on the understanding that at this point the project is very much in the conceptualisation stage, no official approval or funding have yet been secured to support it. In our view the project as proposed is a sound and welcome one. It responds to the concern so frequently raised that there is an urgent need to rationalise existing protection related policies and guidelines.

> ➢ We support the development of a UNHCR Operational Protection Toolkit that will rationalise UNHCR policies and guidelines, many of which inform the monitoring function including: a rights based strategic and integrated approach to programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; monitoring guidelines; standardized incident reporting; and clarity of roles and responsibilities of staff and management.

> ➢ If this project proceeds, and includes the development of monitoring guidelines, we advise the latter be informed by our recommendations concerning a generic monitoring guide noted above.

Standards and indicators

76. There is interest within DIP in developing quantifiable protection indicators that could be used in field level strategic planning, monitoring, and assessment and reporting. Work is currently being done in this regard within the RSD unit and the Resettlement section of DIP. Meanwhile a provisional set of standards and indicators for all sectors, including protection was distributed to all operations in February 2003[78] for use in strategic planning and in the country reports. POS is currently working with PCOS of DOS to further refine these and extend them to more of the protection staff activities.

77. The use of a limited set of core standards and indicators for the purposes of the COP and annual reports is to allow a comparison between operations. In addition,

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[76] It will, among other things, provide guidance on: protection problems that arise in camp situations and appropriate interventions; fostering a team-based approach to protection among UNHCR staff and UNHCR and NGO partners; and how to ensure refugees are engaged as partners in protection.

[77] This information was provided by DIP, drawn from a draft of the project proposal dated July 3, 2003.

[78] 'Parameters and Further Procedures for Submission and Review of 2004 Country Operations Plans and Headquarters Plans', IOM/FOM/13/2003.

offices are encouraged to develop and use other standards and indicators that suit their operations for programme planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment. The use of standards and indicators should help ensure that information coming from the field is collected and analysed in a consistent, systematic manner and one that provides a picture of progress towards a desired result.

78.   The PCOS issued standards and indicators for the protection sector were provisional ones, however, it is of note that some of those issued are too imprecise to be of much benefit. For example, one standard and related indicator is that all refugees have access to UNHCR (standard) with the indicator being the current proportion. This is too vague to be very useful since the occasional presence of a UNHCR staff person in a camp could be said to indicate access to UNHCR – when in practice the amount of time spent there is too short to ensure that access is equally available to all or UNHCR staff may not be seen as approachable. Another standard is that there be no cases of SGBV yet there is no measurable indicator other than the number of reported cases which itself is not an adequate indicator of the actual incidence of SGBV in a given situation.

79.   According to the RWGE Unit, they recognised some of the gender shortcomings in the PCOS core set of standards and indicators and were interested in working on ensuring that they were gender and age sensitive. However, we were told that a shortage of resources and a perceived reluctance to embark on a more ambitious set of core indicators initially within PCOS had discouraged them. Similarly we understand that the RCC Unit was told by PCOS that making the standards and indicators age sensitive would await a later stage of development.

80.   The RWGE Unit has since commissioned an intern to draft a set of standards and indicators for measuring progress against the High Commissioners five commitments to refugee women. We were provided with the most recent draft of the five commitments set of indicators. At this stage they are considerably different from the PCOS design. The latter, for the most part establish a quantifiable standard (related to output or impact) corresponding to quantifiable indicators against which progress towards the standard can be ascertained. In contrast, the five commitments set refer to 'standards' as reporting timeframes or timeframes within which an objective, which generally appears as a process, must be met.[79] Additionally, the PCOS standards and indicators are a core set, fewer than ten indicators assigned to each sector.   The five commitments set, in contrast, number over 100 indicators even though they are also intended to be 'limited to a core set, to allow flexibility in actual implementation of the five commitments according to specific country contexts'. [80]

81.   The variance in the two approaches is illustrated in relation to the standards and indicators concerning the commitment to provide sanitary materials. The PCOS set has one standard (available to 100% of refugee women and girls in need of the materials) and one indicator (that locally appropriate materials are available). The draft set prepared for the Refugee Women and Gender Unit have eight objectives for this commitment and thirteen indicators. Most of the latter are process indicators relating to planning, procurement, distribution and frequency of consultation with refugee women and girls.

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[79] Most recent draft of this set provided by the Refugee Women and Gender Equality Unit June 29, 2003.
[80] Communication from Margaret Mead, June 30, 2003.

82.   Since the RWGE Unit embarked on its standards and indicators project, PCOS has entered another phase of its work in the area, continuing to refine the set of core standards and indicators and work towards further consolidation of their use in UNHCR operations. We understand from PCOS, that refugee women and refugee children specialists would be consulted to ensure that the standards and indicators are age and gender sensitive. However, this is not specifically mentioned in the recent memorandum from PCOS setting out its proposed work plan [81]

83.   A related development has occurred within the Health and Community Section of DOS. An intern was hired to develop a set of standards and indicators for the community services function, intended for inclusion in the PCOS core set.[82] These are much closer to the approach adopted by PCOS in that they comprise fewer than ten core measurable indicators, which are related to a relevant quantifiable standard. A number of these cross into the protection sector and should prove helpful to both monitoring and reporting providing that there is coordination in this regard between community services and protection staff. [83] Given the overlap in some of their responsibilities, and the lack of cooperation and coordination between the two that was pointedly noted in the Community Services evaluation and by other evaluators, it is unfortunate that the community standards and indicators that are being sent to the field for use, were not sent to DIP for review and consultation. We therefore recommend that:

> ➢ Since DIP is present on the PCOS standards and indicators working group, the community services standards and indicators should be included within the group's deliberations to ensure consistency with those currently being developed for the protection sector.

84.   PCOS would like to carry forward the work undertaken on standards and indicators. In particular, it suggests that it do so by 1) consolidating a set of standards by sector including protection; 2) developing a methodology for the use of standards in all phases of UNHCR's programme management cycle; and 3) elaborating a Field Guide for UNHCR staff and partners on the use of standards in field operations. As part of this work plan, PCOS intends to clarify the criteria for determining that a standard should be part of a 'core' set and determining the need to develop a broader set of standards by sector and for protection for more specific use by operations managers at the field level. [84]

85.   PCOS' proposed work plan wisely involves cross-departmental direction and cooperation in the various groups it has proposed to carry on the standards

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[81] Memorandum from Mengesha Kebede, Chief, PCOS to Marjon Kamara, Director, DOS , June 19, 2003. It is of note that the Refugee Women's evaluations recommended that DOS require greater collaboration among the various parts of DOS, including between the Refugee Women and Gender Quality Unit and PCOS. Above note 5, p. 55.

[82] Bethany Wofford, 'Community Services: Exploring Standards and Indicators', Geneva, j2003

[83] Those that overlap with the protection sector include: % of unaccompanied, separated or child-head of household children placed with foster families or in peer support groups; refugee population profile (age, gender, disability, groups at risk) conducted at strategic stages; and % of persons who participate in awareness programmes operated by the refugee community that address community strategies for protection including safety, prevention of SGBV/other forms of violence and of child exploitation or abuse. Ibid. pp. 24 –24.

[84] Memorandum from Mengesha Kebede, Chief, PCOS to Marjon Kamara, Director, DOS , June 19, 2003.

initiative.[85] For example, a Technical Group, responsible for setting standards, would be drawn from DOS and DIP.

> ➤ We believe the work of PCOS to be very valuable and if pursued as intended it should improve assessment and planning and reinforce a 'culture of monitoring' as intended. We suggest that as part of its work plan, the Technical Group, should it be constituted, analyse the five commitments' standards and indicators developed by the RWGE Unit with a view to ensuring that they are rationalised according to agreed criteria.

> ➤ We also recommend that a refugee children specialist review the consolidated set of standards to ensure that they are age sensitive.

Protection training

86.   At the risk of stating the obvious, one of the requirements to effective monitoring, is knowing what is meant by protection, what risks refugees are exposed to, and what one should be looking for when monitoring. Surprisingly given the UNHCR's protection mandate there is no requirement that new staff, even new protection staff, have any UNHCR protection training before commencing work in the field. While there is an induction toolkit, this toolkit does not address substantive protection issues.[86] In this regard, UNHCR's policy and practice stands in sharp contrast to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which also has a protection mandate and whose professional staff are given a four week introductory course in ICRC's mandate and into its results based programming. Initial training is later followed up with a two-week training courses in protection, assistance and law, which take place either in Geneva or in the field.[87]

87.   Although not mandatory, UNHCR does have a number of protection training learning programmes and workshops.

88.   Protection Learning Programme (PLP). PCS has developed an effective distance protection course known as the Protection Learning Programme (PLP). The PLP is a self-study programme that is open to all international and national professional staff as well as senior service staff (G 5 and above) whose work supports the organisation's protection mandate. Junior and mid level staff constitute the majority of participants. The overarching objective of the programme is to enhance staff members' appreciation of the UNHCR's protection mandate, highlighting the protection issues that all programme and protection staff must be aware in their work, and providing guidance on how they can work together and in partnership with NGOs, government, refugees and others of concern to ensure that programmes are planned and delivered in a manner that ensures effective protection. [88]

89.   The programme runs over a period of ten months and is carried out in three phases. The first phase involves a series of study units to be completed over a six-month period. The units cover a range of issues such as the international legal

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[85] Discussed more fully in Chapter 5, 'Monitoring and the UNHCR Management Environment'.
[86] To be confirmed with Mike Alford, Chief, Staff Development Services (SDS).
[87] Interview with Andreas Wigger, Adjoint au Directeur general, ICRC, June 30, 2003.
[88] It incorporates references to and key principles in Action for the Rights of Children (ARC), People Oriented Planning (POP) and SGBV training.

protection regime, and protection issues arising in situations of emergency, asylum, refugee camps, resettlement, and voluntary repatriation. In addition, there are units that address how to protect internally displaced persons and stateless persons and how to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. The second phase of the study programme involves a four and a half day workshop where participants are able to discuss and develop the issues and ideas raised in the self-study period. Over the next two or three months they are to apply the ideas generated in the course to their work while continuing to communicate with other participants in the programme.

90.   Since it began three years ago, approximately 500 staff members working in 85 countries have participated. DIP is encouraged with the results of the PLP. The Department reports that, based upon the evaluations it has received, the PLP is a more effective learning tool than a workshop based approach.[89] It believes the programme has improved the quality of protection provided to refugees and those of concern by among other things, linking protection concerns to effective programme planning and delivery, enhancing the mainstreaming of issues of gender and age in all activities, improving communication between staff and those of concern, and strengthening partnerships between UNHCR, government and non-government workers.

91.   We find the content of the PLP materials to be very high quality. In raising awareness of protection issues across sectors and by reinforcing a team-based approach among UNHCR staff and its partners, the material addresses key components of good monitoring. However, although reference is made in various units to the importance of monitoring the situation of refugees, the most specific and detailed guidance on monitoring is in the unit on returnee monitoring. We therefore provisionally recommended to PCS that it provide greater emphasis on monitoring by including in the PLP a unit on monitoring the beneficiary population. PLP has responded that while it does not consider a separate unit on monitoring to fit well into the pedagogical framework of the PLP, it intends to incorporate monitoring issues into almost all its units of the revised PLP self-study material. In particular it plans to have two separate units – one on protection in urban situations and another on camp situations focus on monitoring issues. We find this response encouraging.

> ➢ We support PCS's plans to incorporate monitoring issues into almost all its units of the revised PLP and suggest that the monitoring guidance provided be consistent with other initiatives under consideration, such as the proposed Operations Protection Toolkit, the planned PCOS Field Guide to Standards and a generic monitoring guide, should UNHCR develop one, as we have suggested.

92.   The Inspector General and other evaluators have recommended that protection training be provided to all staff. The challenge this poses for UNHCR is how to do so given that the Office's capacity to deliver training is limited by available resources, and impacted by budget cuts. In 2003, for example, UNHCR's global training

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[89]One reason for this is that it promotes a team-based approach and can be delivered to staff with different backgrounds and varying levels of protection knowledge. An advantage of the self-study stage is that by the time of the workshop every participant takes part with a certain level of protection knowledge. Moreover, the post workshop stage requires participants to look at how they are working on a day-to-day basis and to make changes to ensure that their work is more protection oriented. *Information Note: The UNHCR Protection Learning Programmes*, prepared by DIP 2003 and information provided by Diane Goodman, Senior Training Officer, PCS, July 17, 2003.

budget, already having been reduced, was cut by almost 30%.[90]   Given the acknowledged advantages that the longer-term protection learning programme has over workshops, the former is the most desirable learning format but also the most resource intensive. We were told, however, that it might be possible to raise funds in a separate project to carry out PLP training for the majority of staff (or at least for staff whose functions could most benefit from it) over a two to three year period. This would require the agreement and coordination of DIP, DOS and DHRM.

> We recommend that UNHCR adopt a strategy to expand the PLP so that within the next five years all field-based staff, for whom such training is most relevant, will have participated in it. As part of this strategy, we suggest that the feasibility of raising funds for a special project dedicated to the delivery of the PLP be examined.

93.   The PLP is not the solution to the problem that new staff are not required to have had protection training prior to their placement. Nor do we believe expending significant resources into a short-term workshop will provide sufficient meaningful coverage of protection issues to warrant the expense that would be entailed, particularly if it were to take funds away from the delivery of the PLP. It was suggested to us, however, that one feasible option would be to require senior protection officers or regional training officers to organize protection training for all protection staff newly recruited and posted in their area. This could be done regionally once or twice a year with DIP support either by sending a PCS trainer, finances permitting, or by sending training materials.

94.   It is widely acknowledged that new staff, and particularly newly recruited staff with protection responsibilities, receive training on protection issues. We therefore suggest that in regard to protection training of newly recruited staff:

> The induction materials include information that would provide at least a basic understanding of protection issues.

> Field based UNHCR operation oriented protection training/coaching be provided by more experienced staff, as directed by the Head of Office.

> The more robust PLP be made available as soon as possible, and within one year of posting, for protection staff.

> Senior protection officers or regional training officers conduct protection training for all newly recruited protection sector staff in the region on a yearly or biannual basis.

Thematic Protection Learning Programme

95.   The PCS and the POS recently embarked on protection related initiatives for senior staff that also have a bearing on monitoring. The first, Protection Strategies in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict, is one of two programmes that are part of a new

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[90] 'UNHCR Response to the three Evaluations/Assessment of Refugee Women, Children and the Community Services Function', June 2003, p. 6.

Thematic Protection Learning Programme (TPLP)[91] which was developed and delivered by PCS and a number of UNHCR partners.[92] It is a four month mostly distance learning course, (with one workshop in Geneva) open to all Senior Protection Officers, as well as Representatives, Deputy Representatives and Heads of Offices. Its aim is to enhance protection management skills by focusing on issues like how to ensure effective protection of women and children and in particular, responding to SGBV and forcible recruitment. Although not specifically addressed, the need for monitoring, and management accountability for such, is implicit in some of the exercises and explicit in one of the post workshop exercises. The latter asks managers to choose two or three protection related activities to implement over a six week period, one of which relates to accountability for protection such as establishing a mechanism that permits the manager to monitor key protection activities on a regular basis.

96. This learning programme was initiated in May 2003, and participants have not yet finished the course. It is therefore too early to evaluate its effect as PCS are still in the midst of modifying it.

Protection Management Workshop (PMW)

97. Following up on the High Commissioner's directive issued in March 2002 that called on managers to ensure that a clear management and accountability framework for protection activities,[93] the POS developed a Protection Management Workshop (PMW) to assist managers in this respect. From a monitoring perspective, the workshop is a welcome development for it addresses a number of key impediments in effective monitoring in the field. For example, the workshop reading materials and discussions are cantered around two broad themes. The first is how managers can improve the delivery of protection in operations by such things as: 1) ensuring protection principles are mainstreamed in all strategies and programmes; 2) fostering team building and coordination of staff activities in recognition that protection is a function that crosses all sectors; 3) providing partners, who are often the eyes and ears for UNHCR and are able to identify needs and concerns from the field, with mechanisms in place to do so, 4) making sure staff clearly understand that refugee women and children, (in particular response to and prevention of SGBV), are protection priorities of UNHCR and not simply the responsibility of Community Services staff and 5) providing guidance and support to national protection sector staff in the field who are often in the most contact with refugees and are the front line actors in fulfilling protection sector functions.

98. The second broad theme of the workshop is enhancing accountability and covers issues such as how managers can: 1) ensure effective protection monitoring of and by partners; 2) address issues of fraud and malfeasance; 3) create mechanisms for receiving input and concerns from refugees both through formal and informal structures; and 4) hold staff accountable for their protection related functions.

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[91] The other TPLP initiated by PCS in 2003 is Protection Strategies in the Context of Broader Migration Movements. Because the content of this programme is not as directly related to monitoring as the Protection Strategies in the Context of Broader Migration Movements, it is not discussed here.
[92] UNHCR partners in this initiative are UNDP, ILO, UNHCHR, OCHA, ICRC, IOM, Save the Children, Amnesty International and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.
[93] Discussed earlier under 'Senior Office Managers'.

99. The first workshop took place in Tanzania in the spring of 2003. Further regional workshops are planned. They are open to heads of country offices and senior protection sector staff. According to POS, the section is still in the midst of fine-tuning the workshop.

100. We believe that PMW is potentially (as it's untested) a very important initiative that should help to enhance management accountability for effective monitoring, a current weakness in many operations. We also we see an opportunity to coordinate with other initiatives in the Office. In particular,

➢ We encourage firmer linkages between Protection related training and the Operational Management Learning Programme (OMLP). We have noted a number of protection related issues that could be enhanced in the OMLP, many of which are directly addressed in the MPLW. These include clearer guidance and examples of the overlap between technical and protection activities, specific references to the Protection Checklist and, examples of best practices regarding integrated planning, fostering teamwork, and engaging beneficiaries.

➢ We also recommend that the monitoring tools that have been proposed, once developed, be referred to in the PMW. This would include the generic monitoring guide, we have suggested or alternatively, in the absence of such a guide, the situational analysis tool being developed by Community Services, the Field Guide to Standards proposed by PCOS.

Reach Out and other training initiatives with partners

101. In 1997 UNHCR initiated the Reach Out process to strengthen partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs and to increased refugee security. An important element of this process is a three-day workshop for NGO staff in protection principles, standards and working methods. *Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs* is a key training tool. Reach Out is now supervised and implemented by international NGO networks together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

102. UNHCR co-operates with Save the Children, OHCHR, and UNICEF on ARC[94] training. It also co-operates with UNITAR and UNDP in providing training on the protection of refugees in conflict and post conflict situations. It has also a collaborative arrangement with the NGO consortium, JSI, to provide skills enhancement training for staff working on prevention and response to SGBV. Also, as discussed above, UNHCR has collaborated with a number of partners in the development and delivery of the Protection Strategies in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict training programme.

103. UNHCR's relies on its IPs to carry out a number of protection related activities and to provide information on the beneficiary population that forms the basis of monitoring. One concern raised with us is that the degree to which IPs have been exposed to protection training varies considerably. Training of all IPs in protection issues is not currently part of UNHCR's overall training programme. We think it

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[94] Action for the Rights of Children, October 2002

neither economically feasible, nor necessary from a protection point of view to do so. We believe that training of IPs on protection issues, as noted in 'Monitoring with and through Partners' Chapter 6 is best provided on a targeted basis. This would involve country offices assessing the protection capacity of IPs engaged in protection activities and targeting training by UNHCR staff and/or protection training partners according to need.

104. We understand that UNHCR protection staff in the field do carry out operational-oriented training for UNHCR colleagues and partners. However such training is on an ad hoc basis. We were told that PCS is attempting to document such initiatives and to consolidate the training materials used in the field to ensure a less ad hoc means is adopted.[95] PCS has also indicated that it is considering tailoring the PLP for NGOs and partners, providing a shorter and more customized version to meet specific and varying needs.[96]

> ➤ We strongly encourage PCS' current attempt to document and consolidate operational-oriented training initiatives in the field for UNHCR colleagues and partners and recommend that UNHCR develop a policy for the targeted training of IPs given the extensive breadth of their protection interventions in the field.

Reports

105. Annual Protection Report.   The main protection monitoring document available to protection staff at Headquarters is the Annual Protection Report (APR), which must be annually submitted by each country office in February. The APR is intended to assist the Office 'obtain a comprehensive and global picture as to developments and practices of States and of UNHCR in respect of the international protection of refugees with a view to enabling those situations to be monitored, analysed and if necessary, addressed appropriately'.[97] The APRs are used in preparation for meetings of the Standing Committee of ExCom, as briefing documents for field missions and as important planning and reporting documents at the country level. A detailed set of guidelines, 21 pages in length, has been issued that specify the form required of the APR and the issues that are to be covered within it. [98]

106. APRs tend to be extensive and detailed narrative documents. Some protection and programme staff find these reports to be rich and valuable resources, which in their present form can serve the monitoring function. More commonly, however, we were told that the APRs are overly long, too imprecise and too varied in quality to provide a useful overview of the protection situation of refugees and others of concern in a particular country much less what the impact of UNHCR interventions has been. In our discussions with protection and programme staff, and our review of various country reports, including APRs, from a selection of countries across Africa,

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[95] Response from Diane Goodman, Senior Training Officer, PCS, July 17, 2003.

[96] This is partly in response to the fact that of the NGO partners who have taken the PLP, only 50% were able to complete it.

[97] Revised Guidelines attached to IOM/71/2002 p. 3

[98] Ibid.

Asia, America and Europe, we have identified the following problems that in our view limited the effectiveness of the APR as a monitoring tool.

107. The first is that it tends to be unnecessarily long. On average nearly half of each of the APRs we canvassed were descriptive of laws, policies and practices that are relatively static and that did not change during the reporting year. These include, for example, the sources of law, the way refugee status is determined, the rights accorded to refugees and asylum seekers, and the roles of other actors engaged in the promotion of human rights. The narratives associated with these sections often are repeated year after year. As an alternative, we suggest that:

> General country context descriptions, currently in the APR, should be moved to a background document, and the APR concentrated on highlighting: what has changed; what were the protection concerns of the office through the reporting year; what steps were taken to address them and the impact UNHCR interventions and other changes in the protection environment had on refugees and others of concern.

108. A second problematic area is that APRs tend to focus on protection issues that fall within the protection sector, and do not highlight protection issues that are of concern in other sectors. For example, in one Country Report it was noted that insufficient quantities of food had led to high levels of stunted growth that was having a 'deleterious effect on the physical and mental (and future productivity) of the beneficiaries.' This important development and concern, however was not picked up in the APR. If the APR is intended to be an overview of only issues that fall within the protection sector, then such an omission, and the relatively narrow focus of many APR may not be problematic. However, this is not the case, as is made clear in the IOM/FOM that introduced the revised guidelines for completing the APR. It emphasises that 'it is extremely important that protection staff closely involve management, programme, technical, community services and administrative staff, Sub-Office and Field Office staff (where applicable), as well as regional advisors on women and children in the preparation of the APRs, *to ensure that they are comprehensive in their coverage* of key protection issues addressed during the reporting period.'[99] [Emphasis added]

109. The directive also encourages protection staff to reflect in the APRs specific activities undertaken to respond to protection challenges using some of the strategies contained in the Protection Checklist. The latter, as noted above, canvasses protection issues, activities and indicators of progress across sectors during different stages of the displacement cycle. It reflects the Office's repeated recognition of the multi-layered nature of UNHCR's protection mandate, involving legal and other sectoral based assistance. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Protection framework, UNHCR's protection activities therefore extend beyond those that traditionally have been within the purview of its 'protection staff' including ensuring sufficient and equitable access to food, clean water, adequate shelter, sanitation and universal access to primary education.

110. In focusing on the traditional 'protection' activities and APRs tend not to provide a complete overview of the protection situation of the group under review as desired. We therefore recommend that:

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[99] IOM/71/2002, 2002 'Annual Protection Reports'

> ➢ Given that the office is moving toward a more integrated approach to planning, and a has taken steps to ensure that protection strategies are included in the Country Operations Plan,[100] these efforts could further be supported by greater harmonisation between the protection strategies highlighted in the Protection Checklist and the APR. Specifically this would mean including protection issues arising in sectors outside the protection sector.

111.   An obvious objection to the above suggestion is that by doing so, more would have to be reported on in the APR, making the document even longer than it presently tends to be. However, this would not necessarily be the case if the static descriptive parts were eliminated and the APR restricted to reporting on the developments of the reporting year and the protection concerns of the office with respect to the country under review.   Moreover we suggest that:

> ➢ Further streamlining could be accomplished by placing greater emphasis on analysis of protection issues raised in the report and impact of activities to address these issues rather than on lengthy descriptions of activities that tend to be of particular focus in many APR. In this regard, UNHCR's development of standards and indicators and use of an adapted version of the Log-Frame could be of considerable benefit and would enhance the ability of an office to integrate the information contained in the APR with the next year's COP.

112.   Some offices have already attempted to do this in the final review and outlook chapter of the APR. One particularly effective APR used a Log-Frame in its review of the previous year objectives with fields for 1) objectives, 2) activities, 3) constraints and 4) results. It used a similar Log-Frame to map protection objectives for the following year using fields for 1) objectives, 2) activities, 3) indicators and 4) constraints. This is an effective way of providing a readily accessible picture of the current protection situation and projections for the following year. These Log-Frames could be enhanced further by reference to base line data against which progress or deterioration in the protection situation could be measured.[101]

113.   If APRs were more comprehensive in scope they could then be the basis for the information that is made public in the Country Report (CR). We understand that for years there has been discussion on merging the two documents, but DIP has not been in favour of doing so. DIP's reluctance, as related to us, stemmed in part from its concern that certain information disclosed in the APR is of a confidential and internal nature and should not be made public in the CR. Another was that protection issues could get lost if there was not a separate protection report. [102]

114.   While we do not recommend the merging of the two documents, we do see the advantage of greater harmonization between them. This could be achieved by making the APR a true review of the key protection concerns and activities of the

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[100] 'Parameters and Further Procedures for Submission and Review of 2004 Country Operations Plans and Headquarters Plans', IOM/FOM 13/2003 6 February 2003.

[101] The importance of base line data in setting objectives, outputs and indicators captured in a Log-Frame is emphasised in the *Project Planning in UNHCR: A Practical Guide on the use of Objectives, Outputs and Indicators*" (the *Practical Guide*) p. 10.

[102] Interviews with PCOS and POS. It was agreed, however, that there should be better integration between the APR, CR and COP. In 2002 DIP and DOS revised the formats of the APR and the COP to try and provide a complimentarity between the two.

country programme. The CR then would essentially be a summary of the annual protection report with the privileged information excluded. This would ensure that the APR would remain an internal and candid document, while enhancing the focus on protection in both the APR and the CR. :

> ➢ An internal comprehensive protection report be written annually encompassing all areas currently covered by the APR and the CR, with an integrated analysis of protection issues.

> ➢ A summary public country report be written based on the material in the annual protection report, with the confidential material removed.

115. If, coupled with this, more use were made of standards and indicators in the APR, this would help to structure and ensure relevant information was being received from the field through monitoring. As well, reporting against the standards would enhance assessment and programme planning.

116. Situation Reports (SitReps). Another mechanism for reporting on protection issues arising in country operations are Situation Reports (SitReps) that are to be completed on a monthly basis (or more frequently where required) and sent to the appropriate Bureau. SitReps follow a specific pattern reporting on the following issues: general situation; major developments; statistics and registration; protection and durable solutions; programme; external relations; administration, human resources management and finance. Like the APRs, they tend to be long on narrative. They focus on UNHCR activities (e.g. programme, advocacy, meetings with external actors) as well as changes in the protection situation. Our review of many SitReps confirmed what most of those we interviewed felt about them: they are most useful when they report on programme and protection concerns facing the office and less useful when they are primarily focused on activity reporting. As an activity report, we were told that they were much too detailed to be able to be carefully reviewed by desk officers. Moreover, the detailed outlining of activities tended to obscure the protection issues of concern.

117. We note in this regard that a few years ago the ICRC undertook a review of their reporting mechanisms in conjunction with its changed management system.[103] Following an internal debate about whether a SitRep should be an activity report or an exception report, a compromise was struck, allowing both but stipulating that if a staff member reported on going to a meeting, the staff person had to attach minutes of the meeting. This has apparently acted as an incentive to include only activities of particular import to the Office. [104]

> ➢ If the priority is for the SitRep to highlight programme and protection concerns of a country office that require input from Headquarters, then the present form and content of SitReps should be reviewed with a view to orienting them more to being an exception report than is currently the case.

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[103] For more on ICRC see Chapter 7, 'Monitoring in Other Agencies'.

[104] Interview with Andreas Wigger, Adjoint au Directeur general, ICRC, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, June 30, 2003.

Summary

118.   We believe that the following are key to effective monitoring of the protection sector: a rights based strategic and integrated approach to programme planning, implementation monitoring and evaluation; clarity of roles and responsibilities of staff; staff engagement with the refugee population; management accountability for ensuring that monitoring responsibilities are clearly understood and undertaken cooperatively; the use of standards and indicators in monitoring and reporting, and more inclusive and streamlined APRs.

119.   In light of these considerations, and in view of current practices within UNHCR as outlined in this paper, we make the following suggestions:

Planning

Protection checklist

➢ The Protection Checklist is a very valuable document in that it clearly sets out the protection priorities that must accompany UNHCR interventions. To be operationalised, it requires the support of the DHC and AHC and their direction to senior managers that the Protection Checklist should be used in programme planning, implementation and monitoring.

Joint planning with partners

➢ UNHCR should evaluate the Kenyan joint planning exercise undertaken with its NGO partners for possible application to all UNHCR operations.

Teamwork

➢ Office managers should hold regular meetings of programme, protection and technical staff to identify key protection concerns in each sector, and devise a strategy for monitoring whereby the roles and responsibilities of each staff member are clarified.

Staff

➢ We support the development of benchmarks for determining protection staff requirements of country offices and the introduction of more flexibility into the protection qualifications profile.

Monitoring tools

Generic monitoring guide

➢ Given the importance of monitoring, we encourage DIP in collaboration with DOS, to develop a generic monitoring guide, that address issues such as the objectives of monitoring, employing an integrated approach, how to monitor,

and that highlights a set of priority monitoring issues for each sector, including the core set developed by PCOS.

➢ Situational Analysis tools, currently being developed by Community Services, would be directly relevant to such an exercise, and in particular those that focus on observation and interviewing techniques to enhance the acquisition of qualitative data.

➢ The development of a set of priority monitoring issues across sectors should draw on the monitoring checklists developed by the technical sectors, the Protection Checklist developed by DIP as well as the core standards and indicators set developed by PCOS.

➢ Although we regard a more simplified monitoring guide as a priority, we would recommend that UNHCR consider the more comprehensive guides on monitoring developed by other agencies to determine which type of guide best fits its operational needs and budgetary constraints.

Operational Protection Toolkit

➢ UNHCR should proceed with the proposed Operational Protection Toolkit that will rationalise UNHCR policies and guidelines, many of which inform the monitoring function including: a rights based strategic and integrated approach to programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; monitoring guidelines; standardized incident reporting; and clarity of roles and responsibilities of staff and management.

➢ If this project proceeds, and includes the development of monitoring guidelines, we advise the latter be informed by our recommendations concerning a generic monitoring guide noted above.

Standards and indicators

➢ The work of PCOS is valuable and if pursued as intended it should improve assessment and planning and reinforce a 'culture of monitoring' as intended. As part of its work plan, the Technical Group, if constituted, should analyse the five commitments' standards and indicators developed by the RWGE Unit with a view to ensuring that they are rationalised according to agreed criteria.

➢ A refugee children specialist should be asked to review the consolidated set of standards to ensure that they are age sensitive.

Protection training

➢ Protection training should be mandatory for all newly recruited field staff, and particularly those with protection responsibilities. Therefore:

> ➢ Induction materials therefore should include information that would provide at least a basic understanding of protection issues.

- ➢ Field based UNHCR operation oriented protection training/coaching be provided by more experienced staff, as directed by the Head of Office.

- ➢ The more robust PLP be made available as soon as possible, and within one year of posting, for protection staff.

- ➢ Senior protection officers or regional training officers be given the time and resources necessary to conduct protection training for all newly recruited protection sector staff in the region on a yearly or biannual basis.

➢ UNHCR should adopt a strategy to expand the PLP so that within the next five years all field-based staff will have participated in it. As part of this strategy, the feasibility of raising funds for a special project dedicated to the delivery of the PLP should be examined.

➢ We support PCS's plans to incorporate monitoring issues into almost all its units of the revised PLP and suggest that the monitoring guidance provided be consistent with other initiatives under consideration, such as the proposed Operations Protection Toolkit, the planned PCOS Field Guide to Standards and a generic monitoring guide, should UNHCR develop one, as we have suggested.

➢ PCS' should be supported in its attempt to document operational-oriented training initiatives in the field for UNHCR colleagues and partners with a view to developing a policy for the targeted training of IPs given the extensive breadth of their protection interventions in the field.

➢ Firmer links should be made in Operational Management Learning Programme (OMLP) to protection materials. These include clearer guidance and examples of the overlap between technical and protection activities, specific references to the Protection Checklist and, examples of best practices regarding integrated planning, fostering teamwork and engaging beneficiaries.

➢ We also recommend that the monitoring tools that have been proposed, once developed, be referred to in the PMW. This would include the generic monitoring guide, we have suggested or alternatively, in the absence of such a guide, the situational analysis tool being developed by Community Services, the Field Guide to Standards proposed by PCOS.

<u>Reporting</u>

➢ The APR should be streamlined and harmonised with other UNHCR policy documents by:

- ➢ Including protection issues arising in all sectors.

> ➢ Moving the static general descriptions to an annex or background document, leaving the APR to focus on the protection concerns of the office through the reporting year; the steps taken to address them the impact UNHCR interventions and other changes in the protection environment had on refugees and others of concern.

> ➢ Using standards and indicators and use of an adapted version of the Log-Frame to enhance the ability of an office to accessibly view protection gaps and progress and to integrate the information contained in the APR with the next year's COP.

➢ The Country Report should be based on a summary of the material in the annual protection report, with the confidential material removed. This will help to avoid duplication, harmonise the reports, maintain a protection focus in both while protecting the need for some information to remain confidential in the APR

➢ If the priority is for the SitRep to highlight programme and protection concerns of a country office that require input from Headquarters, then the present form and content of SitReps should be reviewed with a view to orienting them more to being an exception report than is currently the case.

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Chapter 5. Monitoring and the UNHCR management environment

Introduction

1.   This paper discusses aspects of management in UNHCR as they relate to monitoring including; the background to monitoring in UNHCR, UNHCR's monitoring function, obstacles to effective monitoring, accountability and responsibility for monitoring and the implementation of new monitoring systems. Recommendations are included at appropriate points throughout the text and are summarised in the final section.

2.   This project is taking place against a backdrop of recent crises where refugees have been subject to abuses that UNHCR is concerned it could have done more to prevent. A priority for the project is how UNHCR can avoid, as one interviewee put it, "having all the information but not knowing what was happening".

3.   The ability of UNHCR to enhance its monitoring capacity is a function of its ability to manage change and manage resources, the level of leadership that the senior managers are willing to provide to the enhancement of monitoring, and how well any proposals fit UNHCR culture and practice. These factors are complex and interrelated.

4.   UNHCR capacity to monitor the protection, rights and well-being of refugees is a product of its having:

- Enough staff in the right places and roles

- Skilled personnel, including those of partner organisations, who know what they are looking for, and how to record and report relevant information

- Systems for capturing, transmitting and analysing information

Background to monitoring in UNHCR

Global objectives

5.   In 2003, UNHCR committed itself for the first time to a set of 70 plus corporate objectives, each with a number of indicators, as published in the 2003 Appeal. Given the state of current UNHCR monitoring systems, the monitoring of these global objectives will be challenging. This project has not focused on how to monitor these objectives[1], but rather on the upstream processes (especially field monitoring) that will provide the base information through which global objectives can be monitored in future. Specifically, this project represents a contribution by EPAU to the meeting of part of Global Objectives Strategic Goal 3 which includes the indicator: "programs assessed along with indicators that can clearly convey quantitative and qualitative improvements or deterioration in the protection and well-being of refugees"[2].

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[1] This is the subject of a separate initiative within DOS.

[2] Strategic Goal 3 is "Assess the protection requirements of refugees and other persons of concern and analyse the performance of UNHCR and its partners in regard to the provision of protection and assistance".

Project Delphi

6.   From 1996 to 2000, Project Delphi was the major UNHCR corporate change initiative. The aim of Delphi was "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"[3]. Project Delphi identified a number of problems with operations management directly related to monitoring, including: "durable solution, protection and assistance activities are often planned, viewed and implemented in a parallel, rather than integrated fashion; operational procedures are often cumbersome; and the means of identifying and correcting problems are not effective."

7.   Interview feedback indicates that Delphi was a highly participative process which produced some very positive results - including progress on the Operations Management System (OMS) and developments which have, ultimately, led to the renewal of corporate finance and supply chain systems.   At the same time, as a major corporate change initiative, interviews also indicated that Delphi is seen to have fallen short of expectations with the end result that, for some staff at least, change management now has a bad name[4].

8.   It would be useful for UNHCR to undertake an evaluation of Project Delphi and other organisational change initiatives.

Operations Management System

9.   Project Delphi saw the establishment of phase two of the Operations Management System (OMS).   The aim of OMS was to unify protection and operations in one management system and to develop a comprehensive framework supporting results-based management for UNHCR's operations[5].   Over a period of three years, substantial resources were invested in OMS, much of it in the form of temporary assistance, with a team of more than 15 members at one stage. This team has been gradually disbanded as funding from donors ended and team members moved to other assignments.

10.   One of the OMS working groups focused on Monitoring and Evaluation. Significantly for the future of monitoring in UNHCR, the M&E group reviewed what items required monitoring but does not appear to have produced practical, workable tools for the collection of performance or impact data by field offices.

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[3] Project Delphi: Plan of Action (EC/46/SC/CRP.48) 1996

[4] A number of possible reasons for the limited success of Delphi were raised during this exercise, including: a) Delphi was a finance-oriented concept. There have been continued difficulties with replacement of the outdated FMIS system where the difficulty of linking objectives to budgets has not been resolved Reportedly, years of argument ensued in trying to link finance and logframes at the objectives level; b) Delphi was focused on end delivery of support to refugees. However, as all parts of UNHCR claimed that they were directly involved in delivery, prioritisation of initiatives proved difficult; c)Delphi came to be associated (rightly or wrongly) with budget cuts, undermining its integrity and its wider change objective of the introduction of a performance-oriented management culture; and d) Short term budgeting made the planning of longer term change initiatives difficult (though Delphi did have a four-year run).

[5] Update on Change Management to the Standing Committee of September 2000

11.   The introduction of the Logframe planning format has been accompanied by a significant training programme, including planning and project management workshops and the Operations Management Learning Programme (OMLP). This concerted effort has gone a long way to embedding some of the building blocks of results-based management into programme management across the organization on which effective monitoring can be built.   The hierarchy of objectives is now mandatory for UNHCR programme planning and reporting documents. [Monitoring and its relationship to the OMS are discussed more fully in Chapter 3].

OMS Working Papers

12.   In 1998, a series of OMS working papers set out an analysis of the state of operations management and proposed systems improvements[6]. In most respects, the analysis presented in these papers is still pertinent five years later. The papers most relevant to monitoring are:

- 'Monitoring in UNHCR's new Operations Management System' (monitoring paper)

- 'Planning in UNHCR's new Operations Management System: The Protection and Solutions Strategy' (planning paper) and

- 'International Protection as an Integral Part of UNHCR Operations' (protection paper)

13.   The OMS monitoring paper states: "In the UNHCR context, all monitoring is therefore essentially the active pursuit of the achievement of operational objectives, in relation to the protection mandate, in which staff or the organisation and its partners are continually engaged". On UNHCR monitoring capacity, it comments "...the perception is common that managers do not have the information they need at the appropriate time and in a digestible and retrievable form for almost any given decision or action they have to take. Field offices receive little if any feedback on the reports they send, but on the other hand receive frequent requests for ad-hoc reports on subjects which have been, or could have been, covered in standard reporting….the current programme management system does not prescribe a rigorous or uniform approach to monitoring itself, and is not reinforced with adequate training for staff and partners in this area."

14.   The later materials for the Operations Management Learning Programme (OMLP) module on Monitoring make a similar observation, "…while UNHCR often knows with certainty if funds have been spent as defined in sub-agreement budgets[7], there is often far less certainty as to whether outputs have in fact been delivered as foreseen".

15.   The monitoring paper proposed a number of reforms, including:

- Replace the mid-year SPMR (Sub Project Monitoring Report) and PMR (Project Monitoring Report) with monthly indicator reports

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[6] The complete set of OMS Working Papers are held in the UNHCR KIMS system

[7] but see also section of financial monitoring below

- A field based database system which enables capture of monthly reporting information

- A beneficiary and site assessment and monitoring tool enabling Field Offices to compile baseline and performance data

- Establish a master list of common indicators drawn from UNHCR best practice

16. All of these proposals are still relevant. The first two have not been implemented but are still relevant. The third is now being partially addressed through the development of a Situation Analysis tool. The last is currently being taken forward under the PCOS-led initiative to develop Core Standards and Indicators. The PMR was discontinued as proposed, while the SPMR has yet to be supplemented by monthly indicator reports. Our view is that this would be beneficial (see under Effective Reporting below).

17. The OMS planning paper proposed a number of innovations.

(Since implemented):
- The Logical Framework approach

(Partially implemented):
- Participatory team-based planning as standard UNHCR practice

- Improved technical planning

- Substantive and structured yearly planning exercise for Headquarters Divisions and Bureaux

(Not implemented)
- Single comprehensive unified budget structure

- The Protection and Solutions Strategy

- Field based programme/project management system

18. The protection paper stated that international protection needed to be integrated into all aspects of UNHCR's work. [For more on the integration of protection, see Chapter 4].

Field information systems

19. From 1998-99, Geneva HQ developed spreadsheet models for four country operations (Mexico, Moscow, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania), with the aim of combining objectives and budgets. Based on this experience, an Microsoft Access database system for use within country operations, the Protection and Programme Management System (PPMS), was in development until the project was stopped in 2001, at the same time as the initial corporate PeopleSoft systems developments were suspended. There were concerns about the complexity of PPMS[8] and a potential

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[8] PPMS has not been reviewed during this project

mismatch between PPMS and PeopleSoft based solutions which have yet to be resolved.

Results-based management

20.   UNHCR has been aiming to introduce Results Based Management (RBM) for some years. RBM requires the monitoring cycle to be fully functional, which, as explored elsewhere, is not currently the case. [See Chapter 3]. Past OMS initiatives have had only modest success in linking programme objectives with budgets. Current management systems in UNHCR do not yet support RBM and senior management has acknowledged that the organisation is not yet ready for RBM. Yet, it remains an important aspiration for UNHCR and therefore a driver behind the organisation's need to enhance its monitoring capacity.

21.   A 2001 paper summarising the situation on RBM in UNHCR[9] acknowledges the progress made by UNHCR in the introduction of results-based planning and competency-based career management systems; the promotion of self-evaluation[10]; and the encouragement of risk management.   The paper also highlights the lack of an overall key sponsor and institution-wide vision for RBM; the absence of an adequate information system supporting the management of performance data; and the lack of systematic auditing of the accuracy and relevance of performance information, as weaknesses holding up the implementation of RBM.   These are directly relevant to the current shortcomings in UNHCR's monitoring capacity.

22.   UNHCR is not alone in finding the implementation of RBM challenging. Several multilateral institutions have attempted to introduce RBM in recent years. A recent review[11] of five multilaterals (not including UNHCR) indicates that, despite the rhetoric, limited progress has been made, with UNDP the organisation to have made most advances.

Moving to needs-based budgeting

23.   The needs of refugees and other people of concern far exceed the financial resources made available through UNHCR's regular and supplementary budgets, as the High Commissioner's Action 2 analysis in 2001 made clear.   To date, budgeting has generally been resource-led, not needs-led.   The High Commissioner is now calling for operations to be budgeted on the basis of refugee need, rather than on assumptions about the resources available[12].

24.   Senior managers and Excom members are frustrated by managers' apparent inability to quantify the negative impacts of budget cuts on refugees and others of concern. This, it is claimed, puts the organisation in a weak bargaining position and undermines more rational budget allocation. It also adds weight to the need for

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[9] 'Implementation of Results-Based Management (RBM) in UNHCR', 2001

[10] Little progress has been made on self-evaluation since 2001

[11] "Easier said than done, A review of Results-Based Management in Multilateral Development Institutions" M Flint, March 2003

[12] During the last budgeting round, there was a requirement for offices to prepare two-tier budgets (tier 1 based on resources, and tier 2 based on need). This was not successful as the process caused some confusion.

UNHCR to press ahead with the agreement of core standards and indicators and to undertake the assessments against the standards that will clearly show the gap between the standards and the situation of refugees.

Budget cuts

25.   In 2002, UNHCR had to cut $73 million from its regular budget—nearly 10 percent - because of unfulfilled donor contributions. Since 1998, UNHCR has operated with an average 11 percent shortfall in its regular budget (See Appendix 2 to this paper). It has proven far easier to cut operations budgets than to cut staff posts because, under the UN system, there is an eighteen month lead time on achieving savings from staff cuts. Partly as a result, administration costs in UNHCR no longer vary with operational costs and currently stand at 46% of total spend. "This steady upward-moving staff cost structure is one of the root causes of recent repetitive financial crisis in UNHCR"[13].

26.   This has led to pressure to cut posts, especially at Headquarters, which now accounts for fully one third of UNHCR staff costs, and to streamline the number of Headquarters based sections.   The plan is to lose 55 posts at Headquarters in 2004 and 80 in all by 2005. The Organisational Development and Management section currently under the Controller is to be dismantled and integrated with other elements in the Controller's office[14]. In the same department, there will no longer be any financial training capacity, although financial skill shortages have been identified as an area of weakness for UNHCR. At the same time, the number of posts in the Division of Operational Support (DOS) is to be reduced and technical sections combined.

27.   The relatively small number of technical posts at Headquarters is causing concern to sectoral and thematic advisors who already feel hard pressed to follow and initiate new developments in their specialist fields. (A potential 'silver lining' here is that merging of HQ sections may allow for a more integrated approach to the generation and implementation of guidelines, standards, and indicators).

28.   Cuts in UNHCR advisory, training and other technical staffing levels will have a knock-on effect in the Office's capacity to monitor protection and programmes. The current financial constraints mean that the project team has not proposed additional monitoring-related posts in Headquarters and minimal additional staff resources for monitoring in the field. The approach taken in this project has been to emphasise streamlining, coordination, and other efficiency improvements, partly because the majority of interviewees felt that UNHCR working practices were as important an impediment to monitoring as a shortage of personnel.

29.   We have received enough feedback in the course of the project to indicate that obtaining adequate staffing is a struggle for some operations. Sierra Leone is a case in point. In May 2003, at the time of our field mission, staffing levels were reaching what managers considered to be adequate minimum levels, almost one year after a major new influx of refugees from Liberia, and even then only because of the creative use of staffing mechanisms such as temporary assistance, secondments, UNVs, JPOs

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[13] UNHCR Post Management Model – Discussion paper, March 2003
[14] The OD section being a potential support to coordinated organizational change.

etc. Before the additional staff were recruited, there were certainly concerns about UNHCR's monitoring capacity.

30.   Budget cuts are also affecting staff development. Training budgets peaked in late 1990's at some 2% of overall UNHCR budget but have declined markedly since 2000. They were cut by 35% in 2002 and a further 30% in 2003[15,16]. This will restrict the opportunity to enhance monitoring capacity through staff development.

Refugee statistics

31.   According to the UNHCR Manual[17], "Statistics represent an important tool for planning and monitoring, at both field and Headquarters level… they provide and important and practical yardstick for tracking progress against objectives and for identifying trends and changes in numbers and habits".

32.   Over the past decade, UNHCR has developed the capacity to collect routinely, quality control and publish disaggregated data on populations of refugees and people of concern, including country of origin data, all of which signatories to the 1951 Convention are obliged to provide. This extends to include education statistics, the one sector for which governments are also required to provide data under the Convention. This information is published at country, regional and global levels[18]. By contrast, UNHCR has no such process for consolidating either performance or impact data. One of the challenges for UNHCR is to achieve global information collation on performance without the added incentive of the Convention obligations.

Donor concerns

33.   Donor states are increasingly seeking to scrutinize and control the humanitarian operations they fund[19]. Some donors consider that the multilateral system is best equipped to assess humanitarian needs and prioritise responses to them. Others, including, significantly, most of UNHCR's major donors, no longer accept the UN's comparative advantage based on its mandate alone. Those most in favour of the multilateral system are keen to support the general budget, while others favour earmarking and bilateral funding to NGOs.

34.   Donors represent only one of several groups of UNHCR stakeholders, but an influential one. Of UNHCR's 2002 budget[20], 90% was provided by just ten states, showing the organization's reliance on a small number of donors.

35.   These states have not developed, nor been asked to provide, a common view on how UNHCR monitoring should be enhanced[21]. To gain further insights, a

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[15] According to UNHCR, the number of participants in all forms of training events was 3,709 in 2000, 3,899 in 2001, and an estimated 3,900 in 2002.   Recent budget cuts are likely to reduce these numbers for 2003 and 2004.

[16] Organisations looking to make savings have traditionally seen training budgets as a soft target for budget cuts.

[17] Chapter 4 Section 6.8

[18] including through UNHCR's internet based RefWorld

[19] 'The bilateralization of humanitarian response: implications for UNHCR', ODI, 2002, para 54.

[20] Annual Programme Budget of $787 million and Supplementary Annual Budget of $228 million

meeting was arranged with five of the ten major donor states to discuss UNHCR's monitoring capacity[22]. This group of donors was not convinced that monitoring in UNHCR is effective. They did not suggest that additional reports were required and were more concerned that they might already be demanding too many individual reports from UNHCR. At the same time, they seemed frustrated by the occasions when they were not able to get accurate basic information on, for example, refugee numbers in a country of interest.

36.   Defending UNHCR operations against budget cuts is a real concern for UNHCR management, understandably given UNHCR's funding shortfalls in 2002 and 2003. In the current climate of budget cuts, and with some donors regularly failing to underwrite their budget commitments, monitoring needs to contribute to the provision of better information for donors.   The donor feedback confirmed that, without greater reassurance that monitoring capacity is being strengthened, funding cuts may continue. While there is no guarantee that better monitoring data will reverse or stop the downward trend in the regular budget, continued perceptions of inadequate monitoring systems may exacerbate a downward trend.

37.   The US government is UNHCR's largest donor, currently funding 25% of the overall UNHCR budget. According to the US mission in Geneva, the US State Department's influential Office of Management and Budget is planning a full review of UNHCR operations. This may provide an additional spur to the enhancement of UNHCR monitoring capacity. It will be far better for UNHCR to have its own proactive plan for enhancements in place than to find itself under pressure to make changes to monitoring processes to suit a particular donor.

38.   It is interesting to note that in 1998 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) rejected proposals to develop a common monitoring system for its members. However, in 2002, it took a decision to devise a monitoring system, with the goal of defending budgets to donors[23].   While it seems that this has not made any further progress, it indicates that the link between monitoring and funding is also a concern to other agencies.

39.   While major donors may not be able to agree at a detail level, it would be helpful for them to clarify jointly their broad expectations of UNHCR's monitoring capacity.

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[21] OCHA pointed out that in a recent CAP workshop in Indonesia, donors said they needed more monitoring but when asked to clarify, all they could come up with was "prove you (UN agencies) are relevant".

[22] The meeting was attended by two consultants, a member of EPAU and the Deputy Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilisation Service.

[23] See see www.reliefweb.int/cap IASC Plan of Action 2002 which includes a decision to:
"Develop guidelines for strategic monitoring to improve impact analysis of the CAP in order to demonstrate the impact of under-funding, and to standardise mechanisms of accountability."

UN Secretary General's priorities

40.   By enhancing its monitoring capacity, UNHCR can contribute to the UN Secretary General's current agenda for United Nations reform[24].   The Secretary General's priorities include:

Secretary General's reform priority	Possible UNHCR response
Strengthening of human rights	Greater rights focus in all areas of monitoring
Streamlining reports	Shorter, more focused reports, as discussed below
Coordinating for better results	For monitoring to support coordination effectively, UNHCR will need to spell out more clearly its information requirements
Clarifying roles and responsibilities	Clarifying job descriptions to delineate areas of responsibility for different aspects of monitoring
Promoting partnerships	Building more productive, two-way partnerships with partners, including information exchange
Allocating resources to priorities	Developing a resource allocation system based on more accurate monitoring data about actual results

Table 1 – UN Secretary General's priorities for UN reform

UNHCR's monitoring function

41.   UNHCR does not have a dedicated section with monitoring in its title, nor one with overall responsibility for monitoring. Instead, UNHCR's monitoring function is dispersed across the organisation.

Field offices

42.   UNHCR's network of field, sub-office, country and regional offices undertake the principal monitoring functions within UNHCR.   They are responsible for tracking the development of government law, policy and practice with regard to refugees, oversight of the implementation of sub-agreements by implementing partners, and for maintaining links with all other relevant government, national and international agencies. The UNHCR Manual[25] gives three purposes for monitoring[26], for all of which UNHCR relies on its in-country offices:

- "The main purpose of monitoring is to provide regular feedback to operations managers and help them to identify problems and measure progress and impact thereby allowing for improved operational planning and timely corrective action to operational problems

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[24] The UN Secretary-General's Report to the 57th session of General Assembly

[25] Chapter 4 Section 6.3

[26] From Chapter 4, Section 6.3

- Monitoring provides the means to identify areas where UNHCR and partner performance is lacking and improve control of activities and their outcomes for the maximum benefit of people of concern

- Monitoring also generates a regular flow of information for reporting purposes including information for reports to Headquarters, ExCom, donor representatives, the media and other stakeholders."

Headquarters

43.   At Headquarters, UNHCR has a number of oversight and other mechanisms which play a role in monitoring. These include:

44.   *Inspector General's Office (IGO).* The IGO carries out inspections to assess UNHCR country offices' conformance with UNHCR procedure. The Inspector General is responsible for monitoring the implementation of inspection report recommendations. Routine inspections make checks on some aspects of the monitoring system[27].

45.   *Audit Service.* The annual programme of some 50 internal and external audits checks UNHCR offices' financial probity and conformance to UNHCR financial procedures, as well as a sample of implementing partners' financial and reporting procedures. Financial monitoring of UNHCR offices and partners is covered in internal audits conducted by the UNHCR auditors housed within the Office of Internal Oversight at the Palais des Nations. UNHCR's in-house Audit Focal Point monitors the implementation of audit recommendations.

46.   *Division of Operational Support.* The Division of Operational Support includes a number of sections which track the progress of various sectors and policy priority areas within UNHCR operations, including Engineering and Environment, Health and Community Development, Reintegration and Local Settlement, as well as Gender Equity, Refugee Women and Refugee Children. The Programme Coordination and Operations Support Section (PCOS) has responsibility for the development of the Operations Management System (OMS), including monitoring. PCOS also has a monitoring role in the checking of the quality of project submissions.

47.   *Department of International Protection.* The Protection Policy and Legal Advice Service of DIP is responsible for tracking government's compliance with the 1951 Convention and associated refugee, human rights and international law. The Protection Operations Support Section (POS) monitors the application of law within UNHCR field operations and conducts oversight and inspection missions in collaboration with the Inspector General's Office. [The role of DIP is covered more fully in Chapter 4].

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[27] A review of a random sample of five inspection reports from 2002/3 (India, DRC/ROC, Zambia, Myanmar, South Africa) found two recommendations on monitoring, both in relation to monitoring of partners. The IGO mission checklist contains specific references in relation to 1) UNHCR Representation exercising the four core management functions: planning, organizing, directing and controlling (monitoring and evaluation); and 2) to checking on monitoring systems for food monitoring

48.   *Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit*.   EPAU is part of UNHCR's oversight mechanism but is not directly involved in monitoring and does not have any responsibility for the organisation's monitoring procedures[28].

Obstacles to effective monitoring

49.   A majority of UNHCR staff are keenly aware of the need to improve monitoring.   In recent years a number of positive initiatives have been taken to improve activities that support improved monitoring, including improved planning, efforts to tackle shortages of protection staffing, and the introduction of learning programmes, especially for Protection and Operations Management.

50.   However, many of the weaknesses previously detailed in the 1998 OMS working papers have not yet been addressed. It would be misleading for the project team to portray monitoring in UNHCR as anything other than weak.   Several negative features within UNHCR management practice provide obstacles to the improvement of monitoring, some of which have no immediate connection to monitoring, but all of which constrain the organisation's ability to enhance its monitoring capability.

Presence

51.   The number one requirement for effective monitoring is adequate presence of UNHCR staff in refugee camps, or in the case of urban caseload, ready access to staff by refugees. The impression captured in the TOR that UNHCR field presence has reduced cannot be definitively confirmed by this evaluation but it is likely to be the case because of increased reporting and other demands created by increased volumes of electronic communications with field and sub-offices.   Another key factor is security. It is now unusual for national staff to be stationed in refugee camps and almost unknown for international staff to stay in a refugee camp because of security concerns. This is applied as a blanket principle even where security risks are low[29]. Refugee camps may be several hours drive from field and sub offices. Offices may be short of travel budget and staff require considerable commitment to travel to distant camps regularly, often over poor roads.

52.   The sense that monitoring of refugee well-being is not currently drawing adequately on direct contact with refugees was behind the High Commissioner's recent IOM/FOM[30] on staff responsibilities, reminding senior staff, including the Representative, that they should be taking time to monitor through a direct knowledge of the refugee population.

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[28] Practice varies amongst UN agencies in having combined monitoring and evaluation functions (eg UNICEF) and evaluation as a function in its own right (eg UNDP)

[29] For example, in Zambia, the security risks in general are relatively low. Kaomba field office is some two hours drive from Myukwayukwa refugee settlement. While NGOs have compounds adjacent to the camp, UNHCR staff travel to an fro most working days.

[30] 'Management of Protection Activities – Responsibilities of UNHCR staff' IOM/FOM 25/2002 15 March 2002

Fragmented approaches to quality improvement

53.   Recent evaluations have highlighted the multiplicity of UNHCR initiatives affecting the field. In response, "UNHCR acknowledges that the multiplicity of policy priorities leads to a lack of clarity in the field".[31] UNHCR has not established a mechanism for prioritising policy priorities and the application of the associated tools[32]. In a drive to improve the quality of field operations, UNHCR Headquarters has devised many organisation-wide checklists, standards and training packages for protection and for various sectors of assistance. [As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4].

54.   UNHCR seems to have demonstrated a lack of understanding of change management by issuing large volumes of disconnected guidelines and instructions unsystematically, without regard to the pace at which they can be absorbed and without making the connections between them clear.   It is remarkable and disturbing that UNHCR management would think that this approach to quality improvement could be effective.   Some of the individual sets of materials and associated training are high quality and in high demand, but the 'glue' that combines them into a coherent and useable whole is missing. The capacity of operations to absorb new guidance and instructions does not seem to be taken into account.

Shortcomings in Change Management

55.   It is not clear why UNHCR senior management allows the development and implementation of quality improvements to continue in this way.   Why is it acceptable to have a succession of unrelated initiatives that do not allow the bedding-in of one before starting the next? Is the publication of instructions and guidelines a goal in itself, without the need for them to make an impact on the situation of refugees? Reality is probably simpler - the genuine commitment of individuals to improving the protection, rights and well-being of refugees is simply not matched by the organisation's political will or management skill to implement quality improvements.

56.   This problem is not new. The Change Management Update 2000[33] noted the challenges to the organization from parallel change projects. "..These relate to the management and coordination of all the wide-ranging initiatives so that they translate into a coherent set of changes which can be introduced gradually into field operations with due regard to the absorption capacity and time required to adjust established routines". These challenges do not seem to have been addressed and we have found no indication that, since 2000, such coordination has been achieved. Without the requisite coordination mechanisms, the risk is that proposals for improving monitoring may be simply delegated to a specialist team that does not

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[31] UNHCR's response to the Refugee Women's, Children's and Community Services evaluations, May 2003

[32] "….we tend to make commitments and set out indicators (e.g. the Objectives and Indicators in the 2003 Global Appeal; the Agenda for Protection; the Five Commitments on Refugee Women; the Community Development policy paper) but do little to establish mechanisms or procedures that will enable us to report on progress made against those objectives. And when we come under pressure to show the results of our work, the most common approach is to send out hastily-prepared questionnaires to the field, which are answered with varying degrees of accuracy and honesty". (Internal email from Head of EPAU, February 2003).

[33] Update on Change Management to the Standing Committee of September 2000

have the authority or resources to achieve the lasting results that can only come from coordinated thought and action across the organisation.

57.   UNHCR is very much in need of an effective structure for the cross-organisation coordination of change initiatives, which is currently lacking. Within Project Delphi, consultations took place under the chairmanship of a Director for Change[34], a designation UNHCR has since dropped.   UNHCR should consider reviving this role, or an equivalent.

UNHCR management culture

58.   UNHCR appears to be held back by a number of deficiencies in its management culture.

59.   *Compliance*. There is a lack of clarity about when HQ instructions are in fact mandatory and for whom. This can lead to confusion.   For example, the February 2003 Validated Core Standards and Indicators were issued as an IOM/FOM but were, in practice, only advisory. At a later, as yet unspecified, stage, it is probable that these will be 'hardened up' and made compulsory, though perhaps not for all offices. If new monitoring systems are to be introduced world-wide, it will need to be clear when these become mandatory.   Our proposal is that this should only happen after new systems have been field tested and updated[35].

60.   *Disillusionment*.   High levels of staff commitment to the aims of the organisation are in danger of being undermined by cynicism at all levels in the organisation regarding the impact of planning and monitoring on budget allocation. Some managers view resource allocation as an arbitrary, often political, process within the Operations Review Board and elsewhere that is only loosely based on refugee need.   Why bother to improve planning and monitoring if these efforts are not going to make an impact on obtaining the resources required to meet defined standards? When budgeting does become needs-driven[36], it will then start to become worth the effort for managers to enhance monitoring and assessment at field level so as to be able accurately to describe the 'needs gap'.

61.   *Individual action*. A number of informants indicated that the way for middle managers to get things done in UNHCR is by bypassing top management. Where senior management shows itself unwilling or incapable of championing and coordinating improvements, it is best to get on with your 'own thing' and at least achieve modest successes. UNHCR is not unique in this and it is a reasonable response from middle managers. The problem is that where the coordinated input of many actors is required to make change happen, going it alone is ultimately unproductive.

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[34] Although this was a short-lived post

[35] One survey response highlighted the Strategic Management Checklist (1998) as a useful monitoring tool. The use of this checklist does not seem to be mandatory, which is unfortunate, as it includes highly pertinent questions including: "Have plans been drawn up for the establishment of a monitoring system which sets out how the operational team will track and record progress and achievements based on systematic application of indicators?"

[36] Where needs are not judged just on numbers of refugees but on the gaps so far unfilled by UNHCR and other actors

62.   *Short-termism and avoidance.*   A sense that there won't be a sustained commitment of funds and staffing for any one change initiative leads to two opposite tendencies - a) to aim only for short-term quality improvement projects and b) to ignore new initiatives because they will probably die of their own accord, or be forgotten as the next policy priority appears. We have heard both these responses during our interviews.

63.   *Silo mentality.* In UNHCR, there is evidence of a 'silo' mentality, whereby the boundaries between departments inhibit cross-departmental coordination.   As a generalization, disciplinary boundaries are often easier to break down at field level because the need to meet refugee needs can promote a sense of urgency that allows silo walls to be crossed.   At Headquarters, this can be harder, because the staff complement is bigger and there are more vested interests.   Positively, we were told of instances in HQ where organizational barriers are being crossed and a higher level of coordination between disciplines is being exercised, for example, in the development of training packages and guidelines.   The exercise to develop core standards and indicators itself has the potential to generate more cross-departmental dialogue.   Nevertheless,   there   are   still   difficulties   in   communication   and coordination, especially between DIP and DOS, where, notwithstanding recent collaborative efforts, cultural and territorial boundaries remain obstacles limiting the development of an integrated approach to monitoring.

64.   *Workload.*   A recurrent theme of this study is work overload.   How can monitoring capacity be enhanced when field staff already feel overwhelmed? *Any move to add new monitoring tasks without simplifying existing work is unlikely to succeed.* We have been told, and our review of documentation tends to confirm, that reporting requirements are still onerous.   UNHCR procedures, emails and paperwork draw staff time away from working with refugees while all staff, and especially programme staff, face heavy procedural requirements that detract from front-line monitoring.   At the same time, only certain staff have been equipped to undertake basic protection monitoring, thus limiting the protection effect of UNHCR staff presence.

65.   *Hard-to-fill posts.*   Vacant field posts mean weaker monitoring, especially in more hazardous locations where refugees and staff alike may be subject to greater risks.   Hard-to-fill posts in hardship stations remain a challenge for UNHCR, with difficulty in finding suitably qualified personnel, despite the incentives provided[37]. Sometimes less qualified staff have to be brought in who may not have the appropriate monitoring skills[38]. In 2002, there were 106 U.N. volunteers serving in protection functions.   UNVs are relatively inexpensive, but also relatively inexperienced.   According to the Division of Human Resource Management, the number of hard-to-fill posts actually vacant[39] is now down to just 12-15.   Postings to hardship stations will be affected by the recent decision by UNHCR to adopt a system of posting whereby, rather than staff being appointed to a position only if they applied for it, staff can now be posted to fill vacancies.

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[37] We received mixed messages on this subject.   Several HQ and field based staff told us that recruitment to hardship posts is a problem while a minority said that the incentives offered are sufficient to attract the right personnel.

[38] This can provide good staff development opportunities for the individuals but does not necessarily strengthen monitoring capacity.

[39] That is where a vacancy has been advertised and there is no incumbent filling the role.

Planning and reporting

66.   In the operations management cycle, monitoring falls between planning and reporting.   Plans and reports provide important pointers to the effectiveness of monitoring. We have reviewed a sample of 2003 Country Operations Plans (COP), 2003 Letters of Instruction, Sitreps, 2002 Annual Protection Reports, 2002 Country Reports and 2003 Sub-Project Agreements. These vary in quality significantly but the majority of documents share a number of important weaknesses:

- Some plans contain no documented assessment (either situation or needs assessment), or baseline data.

- Objectives and indicators are sometimes confused, that is an objective is entered as an indicator e.g. 'Resettlement movements are smoothly carried out'.

- Indicators are often imprecise, e.g. 'Welfare of refugees, prompt delivery of services' and often appear without associated targets.[40]

- Means of verification are not stated, or they are stated vaguely e.g. 'field visit'. An impact indicator for Community Services is given as "improved living standards for each community irrespective of social standing" but with no indication of how this will be assessed.

- Situation reports report progress but without indicating how this compares with plans, e.g. "2170 households were registered and participated in the gardening programme". Is this ahead, behind or on target?

- Reports do not compare results with plans, often because there was no clear target to compare results with.

- Reports claim results without any supporting evidence or explanation of how the positive conclusion was reached e.g. in relation to training, 'the capacity of partners was significantly enhanced'.

- Reports focus more on activities carried out and less on impacts achieved

67.   In summary, the documentation shows up some critical weaknesses; lack of clear targets, lack of appropriate means of verification, and lack of comparison of actual results versus planned results.

68.   In highlighting such weaknesses, this is not to deny the progress made in improving planning and reporting processes to date. Rather, it is to point out that effective monitoring depends on a 'closed loop', where all parts of the cycle 'join up' [See Chapter 3 for more on the monitoring cycle]. Having clearly defined objectives represents progress, but without defined means of verification, measurements and observations being made and compared with targets, little meaningful can be said about performance or impact.

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[40] 'Target' is not a term currently used by UNHCR. For more on standards, indicators and targets see Chapter 3

69.   While the number of standard reports has slightly reduced in recent years, the length of reports has increased, especially owing to multiple and un-prioritised policy priorities and ad hoc reports on various issues such as older refugees, the environment, disabled refugees, women, gender equality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS.   These can divert time from operational matters.   Several UNHCR working groups have already attempted to streamline reporting requirements and some reports have been done away with in recent years[41] but there has been little consensus as to which reports could be eliminated or streamlined.

Staff Development

70.   Staff development can enhance monitoring capacity by equipping staff with a greater understanding of UNHCR's remit, increasing the ability to make observations, record information and consult with refugees and to report, analyse and act on monitoring results.

Protection awareness

71.   One aspect of monitoring is being able to see "under the surface" to the internal and external risks and causes of risks within any refugee group.   Leaving this to Community Services and Protection personnel only greatly limits the number of protection-aware staff.   Training should be further extended to non-protection staff to broaden the base of staff with a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of protection risks.

72.   In current operations, the international to national staff ratios vary between 1:3 and 1:4, meaning that locally recruited staff make up the bulk of UNHCR personnel. Locally recruited staff may work for several years in the same operation and may have a good knowledge of refugee languages and customs.   The potential impact on improved monitoring therefore of training local/national staff is considerable.   It is UNHCR national staff that has most contact with refugees and provides UNHCR with its primary monitoring feedback, along with partner staff.   Whether UNHCR is effective in its protection monitoring function is therefore largely down to the capacity of its national staff.

Learning programmes

73.   Since 1999, the Staff Development Section (SDS) has led the development of 'the Learning Programme'.   There are currently four interconnected core[42] learning programmes, as illustrated below.[43]   Each core Learning Programme shares six generic sets of objectives, most of which, if met, would help to provide a positive climate for effective monitoring[44].   For monitoring to be enhanced, it would be

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[41] There has recently been agreement on discontinuing the Mid Year report.

[42] Other learning programmes have been developed in addition to the core programmes, for example for Protection, as discussed in Chapter 4.

[43] The Resource Management Programme is yet to be launched. SDS acknowledges the need for this programme, not least to meet the urgent need to raise the financial acumen of the organisation.

[44] These are (in short): 1. Focus on the fulfillment of UNHCR's mandate, 2. Improve teamwork and partnership, 3. Enhance attention towards gender and age considerations and increase participation of refugees - including in monitoring, 4. High standards of personal and professional behaviour among

helpful if the development of results-orientation[45] was included amongst the learning goals.
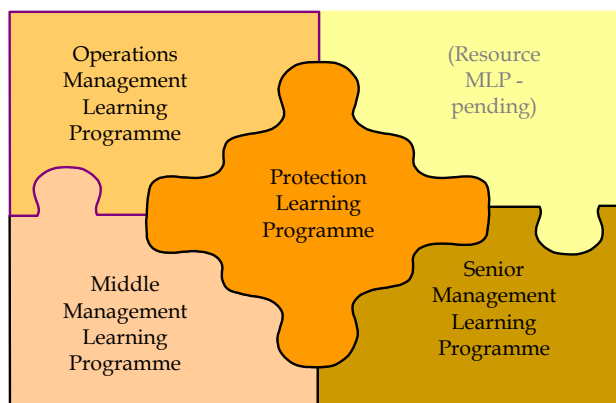

Figure 1 – The Core Learning Programmes

74. UNHCR has been investing substantially in these learning programmes[46], which cover a period of months and include self-study and workshops. The learning approach seems to be widely appreciated by UNHCR staff, including field staff, and results so far are said to be encouraging. The provisional findings from the current external evaluation of the Middle Management Learning Programme (MMLP) and Senior Management Learning Programme (SMLP) are positive, as were those of an internal evaluation of the Protection Learning Programme (PLP) pilot. The Operations Management Learning Programme (OMLP) has yet to be evaluated but we propose that it should be updated to explain more clearly the implications of various forms of assistance for the protection and rights of refugees.

75. Based on a review of training materials, Table 2 below provides a summary of the potential contributions to monitoring capacity of the major training initiatives.

Contributing directly	
	Programme Management, FMIS training and Strategic Planning workshops have involved some 870 staff from September 1999 to date. These cover several aspects of the OMS, including the formulation and application of objectives and indicators.
	The Operations Management Learning Programme is based around UNHCR's OMS and programme management cycle, of which monitoring is one step. Monitoring is one OMLP module, with guidance going beyond the UNHCR Manual Chapter 4.
	The Protection Learning Programme highlights the protection issues that all programme and protection staff must be aware of in their work and how they can work together and in partnership with NGOs, government, refugees to ensure effective protection. [The Protection Learning programme is discussed more fully in Chapter 4]

staff, 5. Ensure clear lines of accountability and responsibility, 6. Develop a work culture of continuous learning.

[45] That is, keeping focused on achieving beneficial end results from activities, not on the carrying out of those activities per se.

[46] Total numbers of current and past participants in the learning programmes are: SMLP 158; MMLP 652; OMLP 197; PLP 500 plus.

Contributing indirectly	
	The People Oriented Planning training programme started in 1991 and continued to the late 1990s, providing training to over 500 people before being suspended. There is now a move to revive the POP, although it has not been evaluated since it began. POP evolved from a gender initiative to a broader focus on refugee focused planning, with regard to men, women and children[47]. POP tried to introduce a more anthropological perspective into UNHCR field presence though, according to SDS, with limited success.
Minimal contribution	
	The Senior and Middle Management Learning Programmes cover planning and coordination, but not monitoring. Given the need for better management supervision of monitoring, this is an important omission. Monitoring is hardly mentioned in the SMLP, while the MMLP alludes to monitoring only indirectly. The MMLP manual states that "managers should be constantly reviewing their allocation, management and control of resources".
	The Disaster Management Training Programme housed by UNDP in Geneva includes nothing specific on monitoring.

Table 2 – Learning/training programmes contribution to monitoring capacity

76.   It is of particular concern that monitoring is largely missing from the MMLP and SMLP. There is no guidance for managers on maximising field presence for effective monitoring, managing a monitoring system, or using monitoring feedback for decision making. This should be rectified as part of the reassessment of the management learning programmes following the recent evaluation.

Field staff

77.   UNHCR has no training programme for its Field[48] staff. The lack of such training may well be undermining monitoring as the Field function is the one which potentially provides the 'glue' between other functions. This in turn is part of a larger question about what the 'integration point' should be for field offices (discussed further under Accountability Concerns, below).

Induction

78.   In recent years, UNHCR has moved to a new process led approach to induction and orientation launched in 2002, based on a Toolkit that provides guidance to managers and staff on setting up induction tailored to the needs of new staff. Based on a recent survey[49], the Staff Development Section reported that 37% of respondents did not receive any induction and recommended that induction become mandatory for new and reassigned personnel. This proposal is supported. In particular, every new staff member, international and national, permanent and temporary, should receive a basic introduction to UNHCR's mandate and its role in protection, broadly defined.

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[47] People-Oriented Planning at Work: Using POP to Improve UNHCR Programming - Mary B. Anderson, December 1994.

[48] Referring to the Field function, as opposed to Programme, Protection etc, rather than to field–level staff in general.

[49] Staff Induction and Orientation Survey Report, September 2003

Temporary assistance

79.   In major operations, many staff may be employed on temporary assistance (TA) contracts. Currently, UNHCR policy limits the access of TA staff to UNHCR training. This policy should be reviewed.   These staff play a crucial monitoring role because of their regular, direct contact with refugees. On-the-job training of assistant level staff by officers will continue to be a key element of training but cannot be relied on. The transfer of skills in one-to-one and small group settings is a skill in itself possessed by some officers but not by others.

Recommendations

 ➢ Modify the MMLP and SMLP to include monitoring, including how to use a monitoring system and take corrective action based in its outputs.

 ➢ Update the OMLP to make the links between assistance and the protection of refugee rights clearer.

 ➢ Allow greater participation of non-protection specialists in the PLP.

 ➢ Provide all new staff with induction into the basics of UNHCR's mandate and protection role.

 ➢ Widen field training in protection and programme to include temporary contract staff.

Financial monitoring

80.   The project TOR did not highlight financial monitoring as a critical issue. However, the scale of the problems associated with financial monitoring means this area cannot be ignored. The Board of Auditors has expressed ongoing concerns about the financial monitoring of implementing partners by Programme Officers. In 2001 and 2002, the Board noted that SPMRs are often not properly reviewed and sometimes improperly signed off. The practice of SPMRs being signed 'subject to verification' has been criticised by auditors who have decided this should be stopped.   UNHCR has acknowledged that financial training of field staff has not been sustained over time.

81.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has identified continuing weaknesses in partner financial reporting capacity. The 2002 OIOS sample of 107 implementing partners did not obtain reasonable assurance for 38 per cent of the expenditure reviewed; the accounting systems were not satisfactory for 23 per cent, and the internal controls were inadequate for 36 per cent. These high percentages should be prompting further action by UNHCR. The Board of Auditors 2002 report notes **"..**with concern the high level of deficiencies among implementing partners"[50].

82.   For UNHCR management, this raises questions of work load and and appropriate skills of those managing partnerships, especially programme officers. Auditors have pointed to a lack of time available for programme staff to follow up on

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[50] While assumptions may be made that it is smaller local partners who have difficulty with financial reporting, some of the main offenders in the OIOS survey were major international NGOs

partner reports and a lack of understanding from implementing partners about UNHCR's reporting requirements. Programme Officers may have no financial background yet be responsible for authorising and monitoring projects valued at millions of dollars per year, while financially trained Finance Officers tend to be handling smaller administration budgets. Not all operations have Project Control Officers, who are dedicated to monitoring the financial performance of partners.

83. The capacity of Headquarters to support financial monitoring is another area of concern. From 1997 to 2002, the Division of Financial and Supply Management (DFSM) has lost 50 per cent of its posts (from 34 to 17). From 2003, there will be no central capacity to provide training of field finance staff. Field-monitoring assignments by DFSM have been discontinued.

Monitoring of UNHCR direct implementation

84. The UNHCR Manual specifies that direct implementation by UNHCR occurs only under "exceptional circumstances" listed in the Manual[51]. However, in 2002, direct implementation of projects by UNHCR was 45 per cent of operational expenditure ($239 million out of $533 million). Much of this expenditure relates to major purchasing exercises but it also includes field projects implemented by UNHCR which should be subject to the same project management disciplines as partner projects. The Board of Auditors has raised concerns about this trend[52]. There is no standard format or frequency for reporting for directly implemented projects. Concern was expressed in some interviews about the lax attitude taken to the monitoring of direct implementation projects as compared to partner monitoring, which is supported by the SPMR.

Recommendation

➢ Implement a standard reporting format for regular reporting for directly implemented projects

Accountability and responsibility

Theoretical basis for accountability

85. Accountability in UNHCR tends to be focused on finance. The UNHCR booklet 'Financial Management Accountability'[53] says that the UNHCR Accountability Framework requires that: "Adequate and reliable means of monitoring and assessing financial management performance are in place".

86. The Middle Management Learning Programme provides a wider theoretical underpinning for accountability. It provides an alternative definition of accountability in UNHCR as "a management requirement to be answerable for something to someone. An individual obligation to perform against an agreed

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[51] i.e. No viable implementing partners in the country, specific request of the host government, initial stage of an operation, when security requires the direct operational involvement of UNHCR

[52] Board of Auditors report, 2002

[53] Financial Management Accountability, UNHCR, 1997

objective for which appropriate authority, resources and freedom to act have been granted (or simply "having to report and be answerable for your performance")". According to the MMLP, for work to be done right, done in a timely manner and done effectively, managers need to ensure that five conditions are met:

- A well founded decision making process

- Suitable and effective controls

- Effective delivery

- Appropriate reporting, and

- Updated systems and processes

87. The UNHCR Manual section[54] on Project Control and Project Closure succinctly describes the principal elements of accountability for projects. It states: "Responsibility for Project Control in the field rests with the Representative and at Headquarters with the Head of Desk or Chief of the initiating section…. It is exercised in three ways:

- Ensuring implementation is in accordance with the project description and work plan

- Ensuring that financial expenditures are in accordance with the approved budget

- Ensuring that the programme of assistance has a positive impact on the well-being of the beneficiaries."

88. If the task of Project Control is delegated simply to the Project Controller there will be an accountability gap as, in practice, the focus of the Project Controller – where present - is largely financial and procedural. This is presumably why the Manual leaves the responsibility for project control with the Representative. The current reliance on the Project Controller for all aspects of project control is misplaced.

89. The current emphasis is on accountability back to UNHCR management and Excom. There is no theoretical under-pinning for 'downward' accountability to refugees and the subject was rarely mentioned in the course of our interviews. The initiative taken by EPAU and PCOS to bring refugees into processes such as self-evaluation has not been followed up.

Accountability concerns

90. Concerns about accountability and the effectiveness of performance management were raised by many interviewees, including staff from the Controllers Office, the Inspector General's Office and the Audit Service. Improved monitoring capacity will help to strengthen all areas of accountability, including evaluation, which has little consistent performance or impact data to go on at present. On the

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[54] Chapter 4 Section 7.4

whole, objectives, indicators and means of verification are not well enough developed to be able to hold managers to account for results.

91. A review of generic job descriptions (see Appendix 1 of this paper) shows that almost all operational roles have some form of monitoring responsibility. There needs to be clarity about how each post contributes to the whole. A complete analysis has not been attempted in this project but some recommendations are offered below to help tighten up accountability in key posts.

92. The monitoring responsibilities of Programme, Field and Protection Officers are set out in the standard job descriptions. Senior Programme/Programme Officers are responsible for the procedural elements of agreeing and monitoring implementing partner contract, while the Field Officer monitors implementation on the ground. In addition to any specific legal responsibilities, Protection Officers are responsible for monitoring "all protection issues". As the understanding of the protection remit broadens, this draws Protection Officers increasingly into the protection aspects of assistance programmes.

93. Effective monitoring requires that someone has an overview of all the implications of all types of monitoring feedback coming into the sub-office or country office – an integration point where such an overview can be taken. At the moment this meeting point seems to be the Representative, or sometimes the Deputy or Assistant Representative, where these posts exist. The project team is not convinced that the Representative provides an effective focal point because of their seniority level and many other representational responsibilities. There may be a structural problem within UNHCR field offices highlighted by an apparent lack of cohesion between various functions, especially programme, field, protection, community services as well as technical disciplines such as health, camp construction etc. Some offices are integrating functions effectively through a team-based approach[55] and we recommend an extension of team-based approaches to monitoring. 'Team-based' does not mean having team meetings but rather having one monitoring approach which all functions are an integral part of, and where each person knows how they fit in and makes regular contributions.

94. The UNHCR Manual[56] is clear[57] that the Representative has overall responsibility for the effective monitoring of results, control, and compliance with procedure. The Representative is the key focal point for responsibilities with regard to the achievement of planned results at field level:

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[55] At the same time, there may be a need for a project management layer that brings all aspects of the UNHCR Project together conceptually and operationally. The implications of changing the office structures are significant and well beyond the scope of this project. No specific proposals are offered here and these observations are included as a contribution to UNHCR future thinking on the effectiveness of field offices.

[56] Chapter 2 Section 7.

[57] The standard Representative job description from KIMS does not match the monitoring responsibilities as described in Chapter 2 of the Manual. The JD does not mention planning or monitoring, while situation monitoring is partly covered by "coordinate at the country level public information and public relations activities and assess the realities of the situation in the country…Provide headquarters on a continuous basis with relevant information on political, legal, social, and economic developments in the country". Accountability for results is not clearly spelt out. The standard JD needs reworking to reflect the Chapter 2 responsibilities.

- "the Representative is held accountable for the effective monitoring of the results achieved and resources used compared with those planned, the analysis and deviation from plans, and corrective action taken by staff under his/her supervision".

- The Representative "reviews periodically planned output and impact of operations for clear compliance with substantive and procedural guidelines, taking into account inspection/evaluation/audit recommendations".

- "The Representative… will ensure soundly conceived and well implemented operational plans and budgets followed by a thorough analysis of results against those plans and budgets.   This is necessary to focus attention on results and to provide a basis for decision-making.   An essential element for control – and the subsequent determination of accountability – will be information about performance. An assessment of actual performance against previously agreed objectives is the basis for monitoring performance throughout UNHCR and for holding staff accountable for results achieved."

95.   Our assessment is that it would be difficult for the Representative to meet these obligations on the basis of the UNHCR monitoring systems as they are currently implemented. This will be all the more so when UNHCR formally adopts Core Standards and Indicators because Representatives will then be held accountable for meeting the standards (or at least meeting them to the extent that agreed budget levels allow).

Recommendation

- ➢ The Representative to ensure that a team-based approach to monitoring allows all aspects of operations and protection to generate an integrated view of the protection, rights and well-being of refugees.

Clarifying responsibilities

96.   *Monitoring systems.* We propose that the Deputy or Assistant Representative[58] be responsible for ensuring that monitoring systems are in place, tailored to the operating environment, and able to supply summary qualitative and quantitative information on the extent to which agreed objectives and corporate standards are being met.   This will involve drawing together Field, Programme, Protection, sectoral specialists, and partners to ensure that requirements are defined and that information can be collected.

97.   *Information management.*   In each major operation, there should be one Information Officer[59] to ensure that qualitative feedback and quantitative data is properly collated and summarised[60].   This does not mean that each major operation needs new staff members for this role as many larger operations already have one or

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[58] Or otherwise a Senior Protection or Programme Officer where there is no Deputy/Assistant, in which case the Senior Officer will need to play a cross-disciplinary monitoring coordination role rather than their more traditional programme or protection focus.

[59] Or Data Management Officer.

[60] According to UNHCR, it currently has some 60 plus 'major' operations.

more staff member filling this or a similar role. Where this is not already the case, additional staff will be required[61].

98.   The title Monitoring Officer should be avoided, as this might set up expectations that monitoring has become the responsibility of a specialist, rather than a function into which all in-country staff make an input.

99.   *Development and support*. Headquarters needs a focus for the development and support of monitoring systems. The most logical solution is for the Director of DOS to take responsibility for the development and maintenance of a *universally applicable and straightforward monitoring system* in field operations, working in close cooperation with DIP and the Bureaux to ensure cross-departmental coordination and leadership. In making this recommendation, we are aware of the demands already placed on DOS and downwards pressures on the DOS budget. However there is currently no better place for this responsibility to be placed and resources to make the relevant development and support possible will need to be reviewed by the organisation. Responsibility for the implementation of monitoring systems lies with the Bureaux Directors, not with the Director of DOS. A UNHCR monitoring system should cover standards and indicators[62], the means of recording and verifying information, and the frequency and mode of transmission of monitoring data.

100.   *Quality control and quality assurance.*   PCOS currently plays a role in commenting on project documentation. We propose that the principal responsibility for quality control of project proposals and reporting should lie with the Desk Officer/Senior Desk Officer. This puts the responsibility for quality where it should lie, with the line management. We further propose that PCOS plays a quality assurance role, making periodic random checks and providing advice to the Bureaux.

101.   *Monitoring Function.*   There is no dedicated monitoring function at Headquarters and we recommend that this remains unchanged. However, we propose that, in medium term, there should be a capacity for global analysis of monitoring data, perhaps within EPAU or in DOS. This function will not be required until global consolidated information comes on stream in two to three years' time.

Recommendations

> ➢ Reinforce the Representative's responsibility for the oversight of field and country-level monitoring systems and for the documented review of performance using information from that system.

> ➢ Clarify the Deputy/Assistant Representative's responsibility for the effective implementation of the field and country-level monitoring system.

> ➢ Appoint a manager to chair, lead and coordinate the development of a new field office monitoring system, in close collaboration with the DIP and the Bureaux – probably the Director of DOS.

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[61] This is one instance where, despite acknowledged budget shortages, additional staffing is proposed.
[62] Including but not limited to the core set.

> ➢ Make Desk Officers and Senior Desk Officers responsible for quality control and PCOS responsible for quality assurance of operations planning, monitoring and reporting. PCOS to provide training and on-going support.

> ➢ Ensure each major operation has one or more Information Officer.

Managing cross-organisational change

Senior management sponsorship

102.   The climate within UNHCR is shifting towards accountability for results, with funding becoming more dependent on being able to show impact backed by verifiable information. For UNHCR to respond to this trend, it will need to be able to achieve changes in a coordinated way. Cross-organisation change initiatives are difficult to implement successfully, as UNHCR's experience over the last decade has shown.

103.   The Director for Change model used in Project Delphi, or a similar approach, is an arrangement UNHCR might usefully adopt again but this time as 'business as usual' rather than as part of a high-profile corporate change project, with its accompanying fanfare and high expectations. What is needed is a medium-term plan for programme and protection monitoring improvements that can be steered through gradually with senior level coordination under a nominated senior manager. This applies equally to monitoring and to all other related quality improvement processes.

104.   A coherent plan of action[63] for quality improvements can only be developed through dialogue between the Deputy High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioner. The DHC has a particular focus on administration and management including human and financial resources management, internal oversight and communications, while the AHC is responsible for all field operations.

Recommendation

> ➢ Appoint one senior manager to coordinate, control, and direct all quality improvement initiatives and ensure a) that all new training, instructions, manual and systems are within the capacity of field offices to absorb, and b) the controlled, gradual introduction of new tools and systems.

Prioritising quality improvements

105.   Quality improvement initiatives have to be prioritised. It is simply not possible to make improvements on all fronts at the same time. Only top management can set the priorities. All new changes have to be timed and supported so that they can be absorbed. The organisation would benefit from adopting some 'rules' to govern implementation, especially the need for training and support for any new guidelines

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[63] We noted that logframes are not used in Headquarters for the management of projects such as the management if this EPAU project. HQ could set an example by using logframes for all 'projects' and build up the skills of HQ staff in logical frameworks at the same time. A plan for the development of monitoring capacity would be a good example of where the organisation could show leadership centrally in its planning and monitoring processes

and instructions to be provided to field offices before their compliance can be required. (See Implementation Principles below).

106. One vehicle that would be an expression of coordination and control of quality improvement is the proposed Generic Monitoring Guide, discussed more fully in other Chapters and the Summary paper.

Building on the core standards and indicators model

107. The growing momentum behind Core Standards and Indicators (Core Set) has led some Bureaux to initiate their own review of standards and indicators. The Bureau for Asia and the Pacific are undertaking a survey of standards, indicators, and types of assistance provided by offices in the region with a view to ensuring appropriate and consistent standards of assistance to persons of concern, with a focus on urban refugees[64]. We understand that the Africa Bureau is currently undertaking a review of the standards being applied across Africa ahead of the 2005 planning round (starting March 2004). In both cases, the aim is to see how the application of standards will impact on resource allocation in the regions. These reviews should be used proactively by the Bureaux to feed into the centrally managed process for agreeing the Core Set.

108. DOS has proposed a model for the management of the Core Set, which we support. From a management perspective, the proposed method represents a model for cross-departmental development, field checking, prioritisation and agreement between parties. The proposed structure is illustrated below.
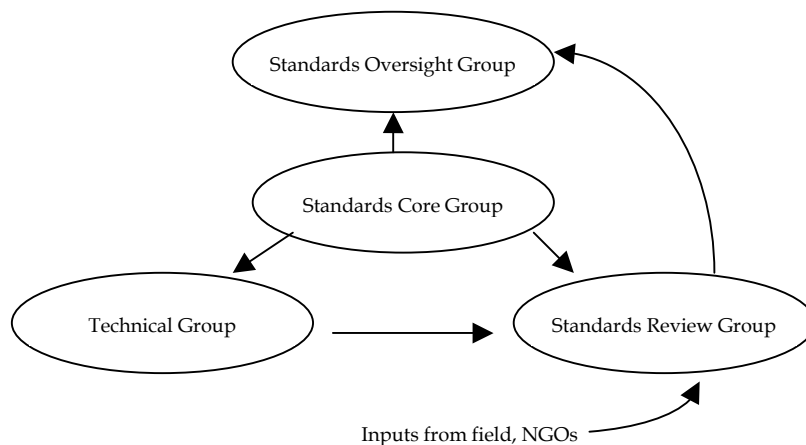
Figure 2 – PCOS proposed model for managing development of the Core Standards and Indicators

109. The aim is for the Standards Oversight Group to provide overall direction and approve the standards and indicators to be applied across UNHCR. It is to be chaired by the AHC, with the DHC, Directors of DOS, DIP, DCI and two Regional Bureaux as members. The Standards Review Group will be cross-departmental and will review standards proposed by the Technical Group. The Technical Group will be drawn from technical units and sections responsible for standards setting. The

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[64] Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Appraisal Period 2002-2004, Standards of Assistance

Standards Core Group, to be chaired by DOS, will coordinate the process and act as focal point. We support this cross-departmental approach to managing the process of developing and agreeing the 'Core Set'.

110. We understand that, in response to these proposals, senior management has decided that the Standards Oversight Group is not required. We recommend that this decision be reversed, for the several reasons outlined above under 'Shortcomings in Change Management'.

111. UNHCR could use a similar model to the one shown in Figure 2 above for controlling other change initiatives.   The risk of dealing with the Core Set and other proposals for enhancing monitoring in isolation, is that they have to be set in the context of all other demands on field offices and, hopefully, wider corporate strategy for quality improvements.

112. Once the Core Set has been agreed by, say, the first quarter of 2004, the challenge will then be how to implement them. The Core Set will not meet all monitoring requirements because it will be, by nature, a selection from a wider set of indicators required for the management of each sector. What is required is a monitoring system of which the core standards and indicators are a part, not the whole.

Recommendation

> Revive the concept of a Standards Oversight Group

> Implement a cross-organisational management structure for all quality improvements

Implementing new monitoring systems

113. The development and implementation of a monitoring system is not a trivial task and UNHCR should be aiming for a minimum three year time-frame to devise and implement a monitoring system, with the appropriate resources and personnel to match.[65]

Implementation principles

114. UNHCR should aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of monitoring, especially in the current resource-poor environment. To this end, we propose the adoption of certain management principles for implementation which, while some

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[65] For some perspective on timescales, the report on the development of a monitoring and evaluation system for the Sexual and Gender Violence Programme in the refugee camps in Kigoma and Ngara, Tanzania, provides useful learning. See 'Monitoring and Evaluation of Sexual and Gender Violence Programming', UNHCR/HCDS, April 2000.   It took the consultant four months to develop the system for this one project. The Consultant's report highlights challenges faced: confusion of roles and responsibilities between and among the different actors; inconsistencies in data collection and analysis; lack of focus on evaluation of outcomes; lengthy narrative reports; programme strategies driven by impressions and a subjective "sense" of problems. Solutions lay in the development of clear systems for reporting, referral and inter-sectoral co-ordination; establishing roles, responsibilities, referral and reporting pathways, and co-ordination mechanisms; definition of programme outcomes and tools for data collection.

will clash with current UNHCR management culture and practice, should support actions to enhance monitoring capacity.

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1. *Delegation of decision making.* Delegate decisions to the lowest possible level consistent with sound decision making. For example, there could be a process for programme staff to agree changes to implementing partner contracts within an overall budget envelope.

2. *Reporting.* It is imperative that UNHCR cuts the time required to produce reports. The following principles are proposed: Move to a concise monthly reporting schedule to make information timely enough for corrective actions; drastically cut the volume of text in reports, and set limits on their length; focus on results against objectives, not on activity; only report exceptions; and tabulate all numerical information in spreadsheets (or databases when available) with electronic transfer and consolidation of data, wherever possible.

3. *Field absorption capacity.* The uncoordinated issuing of new instructions and guidelines has been ineffective because it has not taken into account the capacity of the field office to absorb them. It is proposed that:
   - New guidelines and systems are not introduced without being field tested
   - New guidelines may be distributed without the support of related training but compliance can only be required from offices when training and support has been provided
   - New computer systems can only be introduced when accompanied by training and a system of on-going advice and technical support.

4. *Harnessing enthusiasm.* This report has highlighted the need to control new monitoring initiatives. However, faced with funding cuts and the challenge to demonstrate its impact and to advocate on behalf of the refugees, it is essential that rather than simply calling a halt to current monitoring initiatives, the current energy is harnessed, channeled and coordinated by senior management.

5. *Set level of ambition by end usage.* The Terms of Reference required the team to comment on 'level of ambition' in monitoring. This can most usefully be set by looking at the end usage of monitoring information. UNHCR's monitoring systems should not be more ambitious than the organisation's capacity to use the information gathered. Given the current state of work overload at field level, staff have a right to expect that the uses that monitoring information will be put to should be explained and set out in some detail before any monitoring system is implemented.

6. *Multi-year budgets.* Previous change initiatives have been undermined by short term budgeting. UNHCR needs a mechanism that allows corporate change priorities to have a three-year rolling budget. This may sound unrealistic in a difficult funding climate but enhancing monitoring capacity will only be possible with long term management commitment and funding.

Field-level focus

115.   There was a majority consensus amongst interviewees that the first and main challenge is *monitoring at point of delivery*, to improve the protection and assistance to refugees.   While Geneva Headquarters is keen to have consolidated impact data to make global comparisons and to map trends, the first priority is to build the capacity to consistently and regularly collect refugee feedback and performance and impact data in field locations, and only later to develop the capacity to bring this information together for HQ[66].

116.   UNHCR should provide Excom with a plan of how field and country level monitoring capacity is to be developed to show member states how it is going to strengthen its monitoring capacity.   Such a plan, if acted upon, will provide reassurance for Excom members. If the organisation has a realistic, proactive plan to enhance field-level monitoring, Excom is likely to be supportive, even if the provision of global performance information is necessarily delayed into the medium term.   The development of monitoring capacity could be presented to donors as a proposal for project funding.

Recommendations

  ➢ Develop a three year plan for the development of monitoring systems, with field-level monitoring as the priority.

  ➢ Donors to decide jointly what their expectations are for UNHCR monitoring capacity from UNHCR and negotiate with the High Commissioner on how these requirements can be accommodated.

  ➢ Donors to be asked to back the emphasis on the development of field based monitoring systems with sponsorship (funds, technical personnel) for a 3-year project.

Staffing levels

117.   Monitoring at the point of delivery requires adequate levels of staffing in the field[67].   DOS has been planning to undertake an exercise to look at the numbers of staff needed per office but the High Commissioner has requested that this be put on hold.   Some analysis was done by EPAU to compare the operations and administration costs of different operations[68] and so highlight those operations well above or below average[69].   While there can be no hard and fast rule on numbers and types of post for each operation, it would be useful to develop a guideline for ranges of staffing levels that are appropriate, so that the organisation can monitor

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[66] The lack of centrally available management information is well understood. "UNHCR, as an organisation, is suffering from an inability to extract data and build meaningful reports in a timely and efficient manner, both for internal and external use", from the MSRP update 2003, see http://intranet.hcrnet.ch/support/msrp

[67] The project has not attempted an assessment of whether there are adequate numbers of staff in UNHCR refugee operations

[68] There are 109 country offices covering UNHCR operations - assistance operations in 66 countries, asylum development 28, external relations 15

[69] We were informed that at least one ORB decision using this analysis was subsequently overturned by senior management.

operations' staffing levels. This will also provide a planning guide for operations managers.

Recommendation

- ➢ DOS to continue the development of a guideline on appropriate ranges of staffing types and levels for field offices.

Balancing presence and systems

118. While UNHCR recognises several types of monitoring, we have found that UNHCR staff have two contrasting but related views on monitoring priorities.

119. For some informants, monitoring is primarily about staff keeping in touch with the situation of refugee groups and the concerns of individual refugees. This is said to require the simplification and/or reduction of tasks, thereby releasing time for more contact with refugees – the aim being to maximise 'presence', monitor regularly the risks to the human rights of refugees by direct observation, and refugees knowing they have first hand access to UNHCR personnel. Those more concerned with performance monitoring argue the need for systematic recording of data in a way that compares planned outputs and impacts against actuals, with each country operation gathering information in a structured way to allow results-focused progress reporting. Managers at all levels need data to make decisions and to document and explain what the organisation and its partners are achieving.

120. Both these arguments have merit and need to be kept in balance. The two approaches require different skills but both will benefit from simplicity and clarity in associated methods and responsibilities.

Recommendation

- ➢ In implementing plans to enhance monitoring, keep the need for monitoring through field presence in balance with the need for improved monitoring systems.

Monitoring in support of UNHCR Coordination

121. The decrease in the proportion of funding to operations passing through UNHCR means that "in today's world of increasingly complex inter-institutional relationships, diverse funding channels and consensual as opposed to authoritative inter-institutional dynamics, the effective management of coordination processes has become more complex", while sharing information allows for "the identification of gaps and overlaps in protection and assistance". [70]

122. The UNHCR Manual[71] lists under the Representative's responsibilities "communicates UNHCR policies and priorities to, and establishes effective coordination with, all relevant external parties (governments, UN agencies, refugees,

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[70] Quotes from the OMLP materials on Coordination
[71] Chapter 2, Section 7

embassies, NGO partners, and other operational agencies)"[72].   To meet this responsibility fully, the Representative, with support from deputy, senior protection and programme officers, should:

- regularly collect information on how government, international and national actors are assisting refugees and what resources these actors have committed or are prepared to commit

- reflect back by way of briefing, maps, reports etc a consolidated picture on the rights and well-being of refugees to other actors

- identify gaps in provision and planning and how they can be met by UNHCR and through other means

123.   This form of monitoring enables UNHCR both to coordinate and lobby for resources to fill the gaps through UNHCR and other sources of financial or human resource. *It can be argued that this monitoring and coordination role is UNHCR's key added value.* Its mandate provides it with a comparative advantage over and above any other international agency or NGO in the realm of refugee protection and assistance but its current monitoring approach does not allow UNHCR to fulfil this part of its mandate well.

Recommendation

- ➢ Reinforce the Representative's strategic monitoring role as a key added value of UNHCR country presence through gathering, synthesising and reflecting back a comprehensive picture of the status of refugees.

Results-oriented culture

124.   As far back as 1993, the Report of the Task Force on Training recognised that an organisation's effectiveness depends upon certain conditions, the most important of which is "the existence of the right management culture, combined with a number of performance-related systems for the management of human resources".

125.   UNHCR now needs to develop cultural attributes that allow results-orientation to work[73]:

- Objective resource allocation criteria – everyone is clear how financial allocations are decided against a transparent set of rules

- Resourcing effective strategies – investing in those shown to effectively meet the needs of refugees

- Learning from mistakes – highlighting those strategies shown not to work so these can be avoided, without punishing those who report failures

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[72] The standard Representative Job Description needs updating to include a more clearly defined monitoring role, which is poorly defined at present in the JD.

[73] The inculcation of a results-oriented culture is beyond the scope of this project and no specific recommendations are offered.

- Changing course in time – shifting resources away from strategies that aren't working quickly enough to avoid a serious negative impact.

Effective reporting

126. For reporting to be useful it has to be both focused and timely. UNHCR already has a monthly reporting cycle via the Situation Report, which is the best reporting interval for tracking and decision making at operations manager level.

127. In a results-oriented environment, reporting has three main questions to answer:

- To what extent are the specific objectives being met?

- What are the reasons for over/under achievement?

- What corrective action has been taken/is required to keep on course?

128. As discussed above, UNHCR may not find it easy to streamline reporting but a focus on the these questions should reduce the length of reports and increase their usefulness.

Recommendation

➢ Modify the Sitrep to include tables drawn up from each sector's logical frameworks, with indicators including but going beyond the core standards, showing month on month progress, not just a monthly snapshot. Narrative reporting reduced to a 2-side exception report, highlighting only key changes in context and constraints. This can be applied at camp, sub-office and country level. (Weekly sitreps will still be required for some emergency or other fast moving situations).

➢ Reporting cycle:

- Weekly, collection of base performance data at point of delivery e.g. camp level, especially from partners and UNHCR field staff
- Monthly, data collated from past four weeks and plotted against previous months
- Quarterly or half yearly (for Bureaux to determine for each operation), commentary on results achieved – 4 sides max.

Improving management information

129. The requirement for managers to have financial information to keep track of financial expenditure is well understood in UNHCR, even if UNHCR financial systems are not yet always able to provide timely information. The imperative for management information on performance and impact is less well established. Do managers know what information they need in this regard? It is not uncommon for a weak control environment to be characterised by a paucity of management information. If managers are not held accountable for planned performance in practice, then they do not need regular, accurate, consolidated information.

According to one senior informant 'the organisation has no culture of management information'.

130. The introduction of standards of protection and assistance has the potential to change this. Accountability will be strengthened first and foremost by senior management clarifying the expectations on managers to meet standards. This will then drive the need for better management information. Managers can, with some justification, object to being held accountable for matters on which organisational systems provide them with no information. At the same time, it is also possible to promote management accountability by improving systems. Relevant, timely management information can empower managers to take greater interest and responsibility, simply through the realisation that control becomes possible given the right information.

Recommendations

> Clarify the management information needs to allow managers to monitor the meeting of agreed standards (this dovetails with recommendations on systems developments below)

Information systems for field operations

131. Field systems such as FMIS (finance) and RICS and FBARS (registration) are legacy systems now widely acknowledged as needing replacement. Monitoring, particularly performance monitoring, could be greatly strengthened by straightforward field-based information systems.

132. Following a review of information systems under project Delphi, PeopleSoft was purchased by the organisation in 1999 as the software platform for new corporate systems solutions. The project was restarted in 2002 as the Management Systems Renewal Project (MRSP) with supply chain and finance as the priorities. These systems are due to go live in Headquarters from January 2004 and will be installed in selected field locations from late 2004. The current implementation is Web-dependent, so only offices with adequate Web access will be suited to the current implementation. Research is going on into whether an off-line version of PeopleSoft could be applied in more remote offices.

133. There is an urgent need for MRSP to interact with DOS and DIP in particular, to ensure that field based solutions meet operations management needs, including for monitoring. It is possible that PeopleSoft will not be able to meet UNHCR's operations management needs, in which case the development of another system that can interface with PeopleSoft will be required. According to the 1998 progress report from Project Delphi, "….none of the companies responding, including PeopleSoft, anticipated being able to meet UNHCR's requirements in the area of protection and programme management without significant customization."

134. A detailed plan needs to be devised to ensure that field monitoring requirements are met through any future implementation. The corporate dialogue required to ensure this happens has not yet begun in earnest. The best use should be made of the detailed analysis and design work already undertaken in the development of Protection and Programme Management System (PPMS) up to 2001.

As part of business systems design, the management information needs of managers at various levels will need to be documented in full, a task already partially completed under PPMS.

135.   A new registration system is under development, called Profile. To refer to this simply as a registration system is somewhat misleading as it also allows for profiling of individual families by tracking key events over time.   This is important for UNHCR planning and monitoring because accurate statistics on refugee numbers is a regular source of disagreement at country or camp level between UNHCR, government and partners and a loss of credibility where UNHCR is deemed to have got the figures wrong.   A more accurate system will allow for better planning and monitoring by UNHCR, and for more credible statistics.

136. This project has not undertaken a survey of individual country-based information systems developments.   Individual offices are taking initiatives to develop systems in the absence of any organisation-wide alternatives. We were introduced to two systems during the Sierra Leone mission, the Reintegration Information Management System and the Information Management Platform.   Other initiatives include the Health Information System developed jointly between the Centre for Disease Control and UNHCR in Pakistan.   In Kenya, database systems for camp populations are in development, incorporating Geographical Information Systems.   Registration systems have been devised for individual country operations, most successfully in Bangladesh (CoxTree), India (Unite), and in Malaysia and less successfully in Guinea and Kosovo.   Experience from these individual registration systems has been fed into the Profile design.   The same should be done when designing corporate operations management (including monitoring) systems.

137.   UNHCR does not have the resources to generate tailored systems for every operation, and this would in any case be wasteful.   From an overall organisational perspective, individual systems developments represent an inefficient use of resources as they are trying to solve a common problem through multiple efforts. That individual managers have taken the initiatives in devising their own systems is laudable and, from a learning standpoint, these provide valuable prototypes that can inform the further development of field-based systems.

138. For monitoring capacity to be enhanced, common systems will need to be installed in all field offices, supported by technical backup and training.   Currently, there is no one coordinator of information systems developments for field offices. This needs to be rectified by the designation of one person at HQ to represent and coordinate *all* information systems requirements for field, sub and country offices – by acting as the Client Representative - and a second person to be made responsible for the technical development of these systems – acting as the Supplier Representative.   This will provide for proper accountability for the definition of business requirements and accountability for meeting the requirements.

Recommendations

> Develop a database system for field offices which provides for the capture of the information from UNHCR logical frameworks in planning documents, and allows for qualitative and quantitative information to be entered against them on a monthly basis.

- Initially such a system should not attempt to link finances to objectives but concentrate on the capture of performance and impact data.
- Develop the system and test in three offices over the next 15-18 months.
- As part of the design, review those monitoring systems already developed within country operations for examples of best practice.
- Ensure this development fits in with MSRP to the extent that it acts as a prototype, or, where necessary, a substitute for PeopleSoft depending on whether a later field-based PeopleSoft module can provide the functionality required.

➢ Appoint a Client Representative at HQ to act on behalf of Bureaux to coordinate all information systems developments for field/country offices and a Supplier Representative as the technical focal point for information systems developments for operations.

Partner monitoring

139.   UNHCR should take steps to deal with the poor financial reporting by some of its implementing partners.

Recommendations

➢ Reinstate central and/or regional financial training capacity in the light of the continued weakness of financial monitoring by UNHCR.

➢ Write to all partners performing poorly on financial reporting restating UNHCR requirements and explaining UNHCR concerns.

➢ Undertake a financial risks assessment on partners, looking for the combination of the largest contracts and those with poor financial reporting and procedures and provide additional oversight in association with the UNHCR auditors. (Since the UNHCR financial training capacity has been largely dismantled, this risk assessment may have to be contracted out).

➢ Partners to work to the same monthly tabulated log-frame based reporting as field offices with requirements explained and built into sub-project agreements.

[See also other recommendations on monitoring with partners in Chapter 6]

Conclusions

1) UNHCR has made progress in improving planning systems, providing for clearer definitions of the hierarchy of objectives. Logical frameworks have been introduced in programme planning and reporting, providing a foundation for effective monitoring.

2) A majority of staff is keen to see monitoring improved but a variety of constraints is holding the organisation back. These include: budget reductions; lack of management compliance with procedure; and lack of coordination and continuity in change management.

3) Monitoring in UNHCR is still weak after several years of training in operations management because poorly defined indicators and a lack of targets and means of verification are failing to close the loop in the monitoring cycle. Accountability and performance management are weakened as a result. Results-oriented management is not yet a reality in UNHCR and cannot become so under current management systems.

4) Budget cuts are leading to a reduction of posts, especially at Headquarters. This may have a negative impact on Headquarters' ability to support improved monitoring.

5) Ten donor states provided 90% of the UNHCR budget for 2002. They have concerns about UNHCR monitoring but have not agreed amongst themselves on how UNHCR monitoring should be enhanced.

6) There are differing views on how monitoring should be improved. Some staff emphasize the need for greater field presence, releasing staff time to be spent in refugee camps, improving communication and spotting and reducing risks. Another view prioritises systems for the regular collection and transmission of performance data. Both are required and need to be held in balance by UNHCR management.

7) A reason why monitoring systems remain weak is that the comparison of objectives against actual results remains almost irrelevant to the resource allocation process, which is the dominant business driver.

8) Monitoring responsibilities, at least as defined in standard UNHCR job descriptions, need clarification.

9) UNHCR has no one section with responsibility for ensuring monitoring is effectively carried out, and does not need one. Rather it needs Heads of Bureaux and Representatives to fulfil the existing monitoring responsibilities already laid down in the UNHCR Manual.

10) Financial monitoring is an area of concern:

11) Programme Officers' financial skills need to be strengthened

12) Systems for the review of implementing partner project finances are inadequate

13)   A substantial percentage of partner financial expenditures are not properly accounted for

14)   The financial capabilities of partners, including some major partners, are often poor.

15)   UNHCR is now directly implementing 45% by value of its operation budget. Much of this value consists of purchases but where there are directly implemented projects, these are not supported by any monitoring procedure.

16)   The priority for enhanced monitoring is the improvement of monitoring at the point of delivery. Field offices require monitoring systems and support personnel for information management. All other higher monitoring 'layers' depend on this building block.

17)   Monitoring can support UNHCR's strategic coordination role. Because if its mandate, UNHCR has the opportunity to develop a comparative advantage in collecting and reflecting back to other agencies information on assessment activities and changes in refugee circumstances.

18)   Diverse quality improvement initiatives by way of manuals and guidelines have been initiated by Headquarters with limited take up at field level. Many of these initiatives have value in themselves but are not being implemented in a coordinated way that allows offices to absorb and make the best use of them.

19)   Corporate leadership and coordination of change initiatives is absent.

20)   The initiative to develop Core Standards and Indicators is a key step in giving managers set standards against which to assess need and judge impact.

21)   Field offices require a standardised straightforward computerised monitoring system.

22)   The development of operations management systems, including monitoring, depend on a) a new emphasis on need-based budgeting, b) a commitment to monitoring the implementation of core standards, and c) demands for better accountability from donors.

23)   Reports tend to be bulky but past attempts to streamline them have not been successful. While the number of required standard reports has been reduced slightly in recent years, the volume of reporting has increased.

24)   UNHCR has invested heavily in various forms of training, including the four core learning programmes, which are popular and for which initial results are encouraging. While programme management, operations management and protection training have contributed to an understanding of monitoring, the management learning programmes are almost silent on the subject. This needs to be rectified.

Summary of management recommendations

➢ Appoint one senior manager to coordinate, control, and direct quality improvement.

➢ Implement a cross-organisational management structure for quality improvement.

➢ Develop a three year plan for the development of monitoring systems.

➢ Reinforce the Representative's responsibility for field and country-level monitoring.

➢ Clarify the Deputy/Assistant Representative's responsibility for field and country-level monitoring systems.

➢ Appoint the Director of DOS to chair, lead and coordinate the development of a new field office monitoring system, in close collaboration with DIP and the Bureaux.

➢ Make Desk Officers and Senior Desk Officers responsible for quality control and PCOS responsible for quality assurance.

➢ Ensure each major operation has one or more Information Officer.

➢ Develop a guideline on appropriate ranges of staffing types and levels for field offices.

➢ Balance the need for field monitoring through field presence and the need for improved monitoring systems.

➢ Reinforce the Representative's strategic monitoring role as a key added value of UNHCR.

➢ The Representative to ensure a team-based approach to monitoring.

➢ Institute monthly reporting to supplement the Situation report, for UNHCR and partners.

➢ Implement a standard reporting format for directly implemented projects.

➢ Clarify the management information needs for meeting agreed standards.

➢ Develop an operations management database system for field offices

➢ Reinstate central and/or regional financial training capacity.

➢ Undertake a financial risks assessment on partners.

➢ Modify the management learning programmes to include monitoring.

➢ Widen field training in protection and programme to include temporary contract staff.

➢ Donors to be asked to back field based monitoring with sponsorship for a 3-year project.

Appendix 1 - Monitoring responsibilities in standard job descriptions

Selected standard job descriptions were reviewed for their monitoring responsibilities:

Job	Relevant duties/responsibilities	Comment
Representative	Coordinate at the country-level public information and public relations activities and assess the realities of the situation on the country. Provide Headquarters, on a continuous basis, with the relevant information on political, legal, social, and economic developments in the country	No specific mention of monitoring Performance management and responsibility for results not mentioned
Deputy Rep	Coordinate project design/planning, budgeting and actual monitoring/controlling of project implementation and the required reporting under the overall framework of project management on close consultation with the Programme Officer.	Designated as the coordinator of programme management, including monitoring
Deputy Rep Protection	(No monitoring related responsibilities included!)	
Deputy Rep Programme	(Only indirect references to monitoring) …assist the Representative in formulating policies systems and procedures to ensure that appropriate types of services and planned and carried out. Assess refugee needs…. ensure plans and implementation are in line with UNHCR policies and.. procedures/modalities	Has supervision and coordination responsibilities but no direct responsibility for ensuring effective monitoring.
Senior Programme Officer	Ensures programme implementation is monitored and reported upon in accordance with established financial and narrative reporting procedures Ensures that assistance programmes meet the common standards agreed upon, and as necessary discuss any related matters with Headquarters, seeking expert advice as appropriate Trains UNHCR staff as well as agency staff in UNHCR procedures related to programme planning, monitoring and reporting Draft reports on programme-related activities as well as implementation and monitoring and makes recommendations to the Head of Office as appropriate	Procedural emphasis. Monitors assistance programmes against "agreed upon standards" but in many cases these are not established
Programme Officer	Assists the management of UNHCR's assistance programmes in the form of project submissions, revisions and reallocations throughout the project lifecycle of needs assessment, budgeting, monitoring, implementation and evaluation in order to fulfil the requirements of UNHCR Programme Management System Trains and provides guidance to UNHCR and implementing partner staff in UNHCR programme management procedures…. Undertakes missions within the geographical area of responsibility to evaluate and improve the planning, programming, implementation and monitoring of assistance projects	Heavy procedural and systems emphasis – far less on results for refugees

Senior Protection Officer	Plans and supervises the development, coordination, implementation and monitoring of protection activities	Will need to coordinate with the SPO to ensure an integrated approach to monitoring
Protection Officer	Monitors all protection issues and coordinates with concerned local authorities and NGOs to ensure that UNHCR is fully informed about the refugees in the region.	Coordinates activities with other parties – what about internally?
Community Services Officer	Monitors and coordinates projects implemented be agencies responsible for social, psycho-social, cultural and educational services, and carries out assessments of all refugee needs	Puts responsibility for understanding and assessing refugee needs squarely with the CSO
Field Officer	Closely monitors the implementation of projects under the geographical area of responsibility and ensures provision of the agreements signed with the implementing partners are adhered to. Prepares regularly written reports on the implementation of projects and the situation in the sites	A key player in monitoring of projects. Also a role in reporting on 'the situation'
Repatriation Officer	Closely monitors the repatriation of refugees and ensures voluntary repatriation	Monitoring in the sense of a specific role in overseeing defined procedures and following up individual cases
Senior Resource Manager (Bureau based)	Advise and assist in planning…. Provide management with an analysis of what happened and why, along with recommendations for improvements, with regard to financial and performance analysis… Support and assist Field Offices and Desks to monitor and control budgets, expenditures and project closure, and to identify and determine the causes of variances and recommend corrective action	Key advisory role in interpreting results from field operations. Strong focus on finance
Desk Officer	(No standard JD available)	

Appendix 2 – UNHCR budgets and staffing levels

UNHCR's Approved Regular and Supplementary Budgets, Actual Funds Received, and Percentage Difference, 1998- 2002. (Dollars, in million).

Year	Regular budget	Funds available	Percentage difference	Supplementary budget	Funds available	Percentage difference
1998	460	384	-17%	609	662	+9%
1999	437	385	-12	815	782	-4
2000	854	780	-9	102	77	-25
2001	791	730	-8	108	146	+36
2002	802	729	-9	228	218	-4

Under the Post Management model, post and staffing figures at 28.2.2003 were as follows:

	Total	Geneva	Field
Regular posts	4,145	758	3,387
Regular plus temporary assistance staff	5,811	821	4,990
Including additional workforce (JPOs, consultants, UNVs, and 'project staff')	6,840	867	5,973

Appendix 3 - References

UNHCR Annual Appeal 2003

Project Delphi: Plan of Action (EC/46/SC/CRP.48) 1996

Update on Change Management to the Standing Committee of September 2000

OMS Working Paper – 'Monitoring in UNHCR's new Operations Management System'

OMS Working Paper – 'Planning in UNHCR's new Operations Management System: The Protection and Solutions Strategy'

OMS Working Paper – 'International Protection as an Integral Part of UNHCR Operations'

'Implementation of Results-Based Management (RBM) in UNHCR', 2001

'Easier said than done: A review of Results-Based Management in Multilateral Development Institutions', M Flint, March 2003

UNHCR Post Management Model – Discussion paper, March 2003

'The bilateralization of humanitarian response: implications for UNHCR', ODI, 2002

IASC Plan of Action 2002

The UN Secretary-General's Report to the 57th session of General Assembly

UNHCR's response to the Refugee Women's, Children's and Community Services evaluations, May 2003

People-Oriented Planning at Work: Using POP to Improve UNHCR Programming - Mary B. Anderson, December 1994.

Financial Management Accountability, UNHCR, 1997

Management of Protection Activities – Responsibilities of UNHCR staff' IOM/FOM 25/2002 15 March 2002

Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Appraisal Period 2002-2004, Standards of Assistance

Management Systems Renewal Project – Project Update 2003

Chapter 6. Monitoring with and through partners

1.	When UNHCR and its donors discuss monitoring, they are often referring to the monitoring carried out by UNHCR's implementing partners. "Partners" refers to operational partners (humanitarian, development and government agencies operating in the field but with whom UNHCR has no contractual relationship) and implementing partners with whom it does. Arguably, partners are one of the single most important variables in UNHCR's monitoring capacity, enabling the agency to increase its access to refugees yet placing its staff paradoxically at a further remove from those for whom they have the mandate to protect.

2.	The views of several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were sought for this paper through telephone interviews and direct consultation in the field[1].

3.	*UNHCR's Manual* states that "direct implementation by UNHCR occurs only under the following exceptional circumstances"[2] and gives some half dozen reasons, first of which is when "there is no viable implementing partner". Nearly half of UNHCR's voluntary funds are disbursed through implementing partners[3]; this represents roughly a third of UNHCR's Annual Budget. According to UNHCR's NGO Liaison Unit, in 1994 UNHCR had 610 implementing partners made up of government, intergovernmental agencies and NGOs; by 2002 this number had risen to 743 partners, with whom UNHCR enters into between 1,300 to 1,400 contracts per year[4]. 21% of the partners are national NGOs and 45% international; 34% are government and intergovernmental agencies[5].

4.	As discussed below, whilst partners continue to be pivotal to UNHCR's monitoring capacity, its market share in their funding and hence its formal influence, continues to decline.

5.	As well as the implementing partners, operational partners also routinely monitor various aspects of the protection status and welfare of the refugees. Many international NGO (INGO) partners themselves work with partners, funding local NGOs and government agencies, further reducing UNHCR's proximity to the interventions and source of monitoring data. UNHCR's ability to monitor is therefore heavily dependent both on its partners' monitoring ability and its access to the partners' monitoring information.

6.	The recently updated *Partnership: An Operations Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners*[6] is the key reference tool for implementing partners and UNHCR staff. It contains "Framework Agreements" which evolved from the 1994 PARinAC process, and aim to encourage a common approach to protection and assistance through setting out standards of conduct and agreed operational modalities regarding, amongst others, security, communications and coordination. Framework

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[1] NGOs interviewed specifically for this paper were LWF, IRC, Oxfam, ARC, ICMC, SCF.

[2] *UNHCR Manual. Chapter 4,Section 5.1* (November 2000)

[3] 44% in 2002 quoted in HPG 11, April 2002

[4] UNHCR's top six implementing partners in 2002 in terms of funding volume were GTZ, International Rescue Committee (IRC), United Nations Volunteers (UNV)s, Government of Pakistan, American Refugee Committee and MIA, Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (Ethiopian government)

[5] UNHCR's top six NGOs in 2002 (in terms of funding) were the International Rescue Committee, American Refugee Committee, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation, Intersos and Lutheran World Federation

[6] Hereafter referred to as the Partnership Handbook

Agreements have now been signed with some 90 NGOs[7]. The *Partnership Handbook* explains both the mechanics of the contractual nature of the relationship through explanations of the various forms and agreements, and acts as a resource to inform partners generally about UNHCR, protection, its mandate, organisational structure, basic programme planning and so on.   Monitoring as a shared responsibility is referred to but not described.

What partners monitor

Assistance

7.   Many of the NGOs have their own assistance sectoral guidelines, standards and indicators against which to monitor; many also use the Sphere Project as their source of minimum standards in humanitarian response. The content and approach of assistance monitoring is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Of note here is the changing relationship between UNHCR and the NGOs on protection monitoring.

Partners in Protection?

8.   Traditionally the domain of UNHCR and the ICRC, protection monitoring has risen up the agenda of the humanitarian community in general and the NGOs in particular.

9.   The notion of NGOs playing a critical protection monitoring role has increasingly taken hold because "despite its mandate UNHCR's hands are often tied by reluctant or frustrated host governments, in-house problems and resource constraints. In the field, this means that NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent players need to position their programmes around these weaknesses, either by filling gaps or by making others responsible for doing so"[8]. Although progress is slow, there is good reason to think that protection has become increasingly mainstreamed and higher on the NGO agenda[9]. Chapter 4, Monitoring in the Protection Sector briefly discusses the considerable scope of protection monitoring through UNHCR partners.

10.   Suffice it to say here that NGO protection activities are extensive and include significant legal and "core" protection interventions, including legal representation and advocacy regarding refugee status determination procedures.

11.   Several NGOs interviewed commented that UNHCR should increase its core protection partnerships with them, delegating, for example, the time consuming preparatory components of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) such as researching individual case files that can take up an entire day of a Protection Officer's time.

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[7] IOM/FOM 48/2003 Memo from the High Commissioner to all staff on partnership July 2003

[8] Henk van Goethem, the Reach Out project manager in his article *NGOs in refugee protection: an unrecognised resource*. Humanitarian Exchange March 2003

[9] Several of the big NGOs are integrating protection into their programmes and/or implementing protection programmes directly. Both IRC and Oxfam have now established protection departments or senior advisors. ACF, SCF and World Vision have also developed their protection activities strategies considerably through either specialised (e.g. child-centred) or mainstreamed programming

12.   In fact, at least in terms of the funding picture, such increased delegation is already happening. The NGOs are increasing the amount of protection work they do for UNHCR.   The funding of implementing partners for legal assistance has increased by 135% since 1994; this compares with an overall drop of more than 50% in all other major sectors[10].

13.   The broader picture of protection (i.e. including community services, though not including integrated protection work in the technical sectors), tells a similar story to the growth in legal assistance work. Protection is now the leading sector for national NGOs, comprising around 30% of their funding; protection accounts for around 22% of the international NGO's funding[11].

14.   If the partners are doing the monitoring, how should UNHCR monitor its partners?

Mechanisms for monitoring implementing partners

15.   How does UNHCR monitor the performance of its implementing partners, thereby discharging its accountability to the stakeholders, particularly to the refugees and displaced? If partners are a channel through which UNHCR can better access people of concern, how does it reliably obtain that information in a timely fashion to know their overall status of protection and well-being and "to track whether protection and solutions interventions are having the desired impact and are proceeding according to plan"[12]?

16.   The *Partnership Handbook* lists seven key monitoring techniques used by UNHCR: meetings and visits, watch activities, talking to the refugees, surveys, gathering information and opinions from many sources, measuring performance indicators and analyzing reports. Of these, meetings, field visits and reports are of particular importance in the partner relationship.

Sub-project monitoring reports

17.   The Sub-Project Monitoring Report (SPMR) is the primary source of written monitoring information about the sub project-level activities of implementing partners.   It consists of a financial and a performance reporting section.   The frequency is typically twice a year for performance reporting, 4 times a year for finance. According to *UNHCR's Manual*, "The purpose of SPMRs is to reflect the proper use of inputs and to compare actual achievements against the planned outputs and indicators in the Sub-Agreement", the latter referring to the contract established between UNHCR and the partner[13].

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[10] UNHCR NGO Liaison Unit

[11] ibid

[12] extract from UNHCR's definition of monitoring, Section 1.4, UNHCR Manual Chapter 4, June 2003

[13] The Sub-Project Agreement between UNHCR and implementing partners includes clauses covering: financial records, legal, insurance coverage, commodity tracking and checking, monitoring distributions of food and non food items, beneficiary participation and so on. Financial monitoring is undertaken against a cash flow plan. Appendix 2 to the agreement obliges partners to conform to UNHCR commitment to zero-tolerance with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse. The agreement includes obligations for the maintenance and supply of financial records and information.

18.   UNHCR offices are expected to carry out three principle tasks on receipt of an SPMR: certify that outputs are in place, clear the accounts, and verify the link between the performance reporting and the accounts. The guidance in the *UNHCR Manual* is predominantly on financial reporting; guidance on how to verify performance is limited to a few lines and emphasises outputs, not quality or impact.

19.   Recurrent audit findings from 2001 and 2002 concern insufficient monitoring of partners including poor follow-up of SPMRs assessed as in need of verification, transferring funds prior to the submission of the SPMR and the need to improve the review of partner's systems and procedures. The implication is that accountabilities are weak; follow-up of poor performance may not be consistent even though as the Controller's internal control checklist of 1998 points out, it is the responsibility of the Representative   to   "address   effectively...unacceptably   poor   or   questionable performance of partners".

20.   NGOs interviewed did not appear to have a problem with the SPMR format. The   concerns   expressed   associated   more   with   their   management. Partners commented that the hierarchical management structure of UNHCR country offices meant that the staff (with whom they agreed programme plans and generally collaborated) could not authorise adaptations even if they remained within existing budgets and overall planning agreements and strategy. Although in theory, some delegation to officers could take place, in practice authority generally rests firmly with the head of office and this inevitably can bottleneck the process. The SPMR is hence a cumbersome tool for the rapid translation of monitoring feedback into significant programme amendments.

21.   The Senior Programme Officers often spend too much time on the "nitty gritty" of finance that could be better examined by finance staff, freeing the officer to use programme skills more fully and appropriately[14].   Staff frequently commented during this review that the SPMRs were viewed above all as a financial and contractual tool, rather than a programme quality monitoring tool. It was also commented that UNHCR officers were often not familiar with the objectives and outputs included in the sub-agreements; the same is apparently often true of the partner's field staff whose office in the capital may agree a contract without consultation or dissemination to the field.

22.   Sub-agreements are also circulated only in printed form, rather than electronically, to prevent unauthorised amendments; UNHCR apparently reformats submissions even if the partner has submitted it in UNHCR's own format. This adds to the time taken for administration, authorisation and the circulation of information between the field offices of each agency's field office, branch office and headquarters. This caution is surprising and slows up proceedings. In response to this UNHCR's legal department has confirmed that "locking" the sub-agreements electronically once authorised to prevent changes is feasible. This would certainly produce a quicker and more responsive mechanism.

23.   Developments have been made to improve the reporting against programme performance and a new SPMR format was issued in 2003, more in line with the results-based *Project Description* used by UNHCR (of which all sub-projects are

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[14] Some programmes have Project Control Officers who are responsible for finance monitoring; this is not standard across all programmes

intended to be a sub-set). This new format requests the partner to report on "specific impact" *vis a vis* the sub-project description and on progress against performance and impact indicators. The clear link and format should improve the function of the SPMR as a management tool.

24.   Is the frequency of the SPMRs adequate to support UNHCR's monitoring needs, either in terms of its communication needs to other stakeholders or for timely corrective action? Typically SPMRs are twice a year for performance reporting, four times a year for finance. Biannual performance reporting of the volume and detail expected of an SPMR is probably more than enough for partners and UNHCR to cope with. However, this leaves too much time for serious problems to establish and is inadequate for feeding UNHCR's regular communications cycles, particularly the (monthly) sitreps.

Alternatives and supplements to the SPMR

25.   It appears that offices find alternative means to supplement the SPMR; key amongst these are bilateral meetings with NGO staff, informal communication and interagency fora.   Other innovations include the creation of simple progress monitoring forms completed by NGOs and submitted at the weekly coordination meetings, such as initiated by UNHCR Sierra Leone. This is a combination of a common way of obtaining frequent and regular information - from the interagency coordination meetings, sectoral and general - with a collection format facilitating analysis and synthesis.   Nonetheless, implementing partners commented that UNHCR also demanded an excessive number of ad hoc reports, suggesting that more comprehensive and frequent reporting was still required. How best to improve the frequency of reports without overloading both parties?

26.   Some of the NGOs interviewed for this evaluation pointed out that their internal reporting and performance management mechanisms already demanded higher frequency reporting, and if a short and sharp monthly report could be extracted from their own reporting, it would not be too onerous[15]. It was also commented that a format minimising narrative and reporting in a logframe format would be feasible and at any rate a useful management tool for the NGO, if they were not already using this tool in their reports.

27.   Any approach that effectively builds upon tools already in the humanitarian management domain, such as the logframe and Sphere, will be more likely to succeed as an accepted and meaningful monitoring tool.   The new SPMR format lends itself easily to such a monthly report; it could reproduce the SPMR's quasi logframe and include progress against the outputs (and impact if appropriate or possible in the timeframe) accompanied by a brief analytical narrative of no more than a page.

28.   This would also be compatible with the workplans already included in the sub-agreements; partners are invited to set up a workplan against the outputs, activities, responsibilities and completion dates and given a choice of three ways of reporting against it: narrative, tabular or Gantt chart. This evaluation's limited review

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[15] In emergency and rapidly evolving contexts, UNHCR offices are apparently known to request a monthly, and even on occasion, weekly report from implementing partners

suggests that workplans are little used, however the evidence is insufficient to say other than these are a simple, useful tool and should be encouraged. It may be easier for all concerned to decide on one, preferably non-narrative, format.

29. In stable contexts, UNHCR could coordinate with other donor's reporting cycles, for example a quarterly report common to many agencies.

Field visits

30. Field visits are an additional and essential monitoring tool. Nonetheless, physically visiting a programme is only recommended on receipt of the SPMR narrative report on performance (i.e. twice a year) and "at least once a year" for financial reporting. How does UNHCR know if the partner's monitoring is reliable, if the quality of the programme is as reported, if the implementing partner has adequate capacity to monitor well?

31. The sub-agreement checklists provided in the Handbook include the directive to "define clearly responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation", the *Partnership Handbook* says "It is recommended that UNHCR offices establish jointly, through agreed and signed minutes with each implementing partner, an annual monitoring and reporting schedule/plan" and the new SPMR format now ensures that monitoring information is provided.

32. Perhaps the theoretical mechanisms have greatly developed, but it seems that the practice has some way to go. A frequent complaint from NGOs and UNHCR headquarters staff is that UNHCR officers (e.g. protection, community services and programme) rarely get to the field. Without such field visits they are not discharging their monitoring duties, either in terms of support and advice to the partner, or to ensure direct contact with the refugees and alternative (direct and cross-checking) sources of feedback on the quality of the partner's programme.

Monitoring the monitors - performance and capacity

33. What if partners don't have the capacity to monitor, or the interest? How do UNHCR staff tackle the organisational assessment and control issues that inevitably dominate the monitoring world beyond the tools and contractual agreements?

34. Staff are left largely to their own devices on how to create relationships with partners, negotiate for information where partners are not in any contractual relationship, translate monitoring information in different formats into one that is compatible with UNHCR's communication systems, provide advice and training and if necessary, take corrective action with the partner.

35. The *Partnership Handbook* includes some guidance on assessing the capacity of potential implementing partners. The four basic conditions that must be met all concern financial, legal and contract-compliance issues but there are also nine qualitative criteria to take into consideration. These are helpful, covering capacities such as staff continuity, local experience and experience of UNHCR and the ability to phase out following completion. However, although "quality of service" and "able to demonstrate a previous ability to deliver such assistance effectively" are included,

they imply a host of programme capacities, skills and systems, including the existence of effective monitoring systems, which are not described.

36. Better skills in organisational assessment could enable resource-strapped UNHCR offices to carry out an assessment of a partner's programme management systems and in particular their monitoring capacity prior to establishing the contract. This could follow a similar approach to the pre-qualification format for procurement currently in place between UNHCR and selected partners. However, an assessment would always have to be validated in the field, since a headquarters assessment could not account for staffing and contextual variations affecting monitoring in practice.

37. An assessment could include the NGO's staff skills, the monitoring systems in place, its institutional reporting requirements, evidence of implementation of accountability policy and practice and so on. UNHCR could subsequently adopt a problem-orientated monitoring approach. Those assessed as strong monitors are the least visited (and most trusted); weak or unknown partners are visited the most frequently and targeted for support. Such a structured assessment may also facilitate the process of discontinuing contracts with partners with serious and persistent performance problems.

38. Whilst training in organisational assessment is certainly preferable, in its absence even a comprehensive checklist would support staff in their evaluation.

39. UNHCR's present and planned developments in improved monitoring systems will certainly help staff recognise a good monitoring system when they see one, an essential start. The development of generic guidelines on good practice in monitoring discussed elsewhere would also provide a useful tool to staff in assessing partner's capacity and targeting advice and training.

Monitoring through operational partners

40. Operational partners are not obliged to report to UNHCR. As part of the UN Country Team, the agency may have a number of formal agreements (such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)) with sister UN agencies that stipulate reporting requirements of both parties. There are global MOUs established between UNHCR and many other UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA) which describe each agency's responsibilities, though mostly in broad terms, such as the UNICEF MOU, to "jointly agree on guidelines and specific methodologies for assessing and monitoring the situation of children on joint concern". In certain contexts, usually complex emergencies, UNHCR may be designated the Lead Agency, or be appointed the Humanitarian Coordinator, either of which role confers some authority to coordinate and thus to expect other members of the UN Country Team to share information. In what form and with what frequency is more a matter of negotiation and varies according to context and capacity.

41. A significant exchange of information occurs through UN interagency meetings.

42. Outside the UN family, UNHCR is even more dependent on the willingness of its (non-funded) government agency and NGO partners to contribute monitoring

information. UNHCR-NGO coordination meetings are an important way of sharing information between the agencies. Just as coordination is key to good programme planning, so it is to ongoing monitoring as it offers the opportunity for information to be rapidly shared with all concerned actors[16]. In some country programmes, partners may provide written information to UNHCR as part of the coordination mechanism.

43. Despite the mandate of UNHCR, in practice, the provision of information is viewed as voluntary and largely dependent on the willingness of the individual agencies to cooperate; this is usually a function of their evaluation of the value of the coordination function. This evaluation cannot comment on the degree to which UNHCR normally succeeds in obtaining information. Interviewees have suggested that it is highly variable, but that overall partners are willing to share information, albeit in their own time. An example of how challenging this can be can be found in the nutrition sector. UNHCR is responsible for monitoring the nutritional status of the refugees, as stated in its MOU with WFP. In Sierra Leone, the UNHCR nutritionist had to negotiate for the results of a nutritional survey carried out by the NGO responsible for nutrition in the camps; the survey was carried out in a way that made the results of little or no value to UNHCR and she was unable to influence the partner to adapt its approach and, apparently, had no funding with which to commission a UNHCR survey[17].

44. Initiatives within UNHCR and the UN overall to promote joint assessments, planning and monitoring within a partnership framework are the chief means available to UNHCR to address this fundamental challenge.

Changing world of partnership

The context

45. The working context has changed significantly since, for example the Great Lakes in the mid-90s when UNHCR could exercise its mandate through a series of contractual relationships with NGOs, determine the rules and exercise its authority at every level of a programme's planning and implementation.

46. In 1970, UNHCR estimated that its partners received @1.5% of their funds from governments; by the late 1990s it had reached @40%. In the 80s, 45% of humanitarian assistance was given in the form of multilateral aid to the UN agencies; it is now around a quarter with the NGOs receiving roughly the same. In some countries (e.g. USA, UK and France) the NGOs receive over 40% of government humanitarian aid[18]. Research by Harvey Redgrave shows that the average growth in income of the 11

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[16] It is recognised that the monitoring potential of information exchange in coordination meetings, whilst essential, is highly dependent on the quality of the meeting, levels of attendance and quality of the information provided; the issues surrounding effective coordination however are beyond the scope of this evaluation

[17] The Report on the Nutrition Situation of Refugees and Displaced Populations (a UN Standing Committee on Nutrition publication) is supported by UNHCR. January 2003's edition for example (RNIS 40) published 23 surveys of which 1 is by UNHCR; 2 are joint UN surveys and 20 are by NGOs.

[18] HPG number 11, April 2002

British NGOs in the DEC[19] agencies between 1997 and 2001 was 69% - the top three grew by 134%[20]. The income of eleven of UNHCR's partner NGOs' is up by 45% since 1994 (eight of the biggest showing an average increase of 205%). Meanwhile UNHCR's income has gone down 33% in the same period[21].

47.   The increase for the NGOs has come from official and private sources, not the multilaterals and, as the above figures suggest, is largely at the latter's expense. The implications for UNHCR is that it occupies a small share of the market place and is therefore dependent on the various actors respecting UNHCR's global mandate as the sole reason for accepting its leadership and authority[22].

48.   Joanna Macrae's paper for UNHCR on the bilateralization of humanitarian response notes that this trend has been accompanied by "donors' enhanced ability to scrutinise the performance of their partners in the field"[23]. Donors such as ECHO and DfID are likely to be monitoring their (often the same) NGOs through a regional or national presence that may not extend to deep field offices, but does include regular visits. The latter are, by some NGOs, appreciated more than the low-key but higher frequency contact of UNHCR's field officers because of their intensity and provision of useful advice and feedback.

UNHCR's role with partners

49.   That UNHCR's monitoring role is crucial for the protection and well-being of refugees, is not in question amongst its partners interviewed for this evaluation. UNHCR must champion the cause of impartiality and the appropriate allocation of resources for refugees and take on the bigger picture in an otherwise fragmented bilateral context. As the chapter on monitoring in ALNAP Annual Review 2003 notes, "NGOs in particular tend to focus on their own beneficiaries or clients and rarely keep updated information about the wider area"; UNHCR can demonstrate real value-added through its particular mandate and through its ability to take a more strategic monitoring role.

50.   What, rather, is in question is how UNHCR should monitor. Should UNHCR invest its (limited) resources in more closely monitoring its partners, since it itself has low capacity and, increasingly, the NGOs have more; or in monitoring those not included in its own and other's programmes, and/or in increasing its ability to play a more strategic, coordinator role that emphasises the analysis, synthesis and use of the other agencies information?

51.   UNHCR can advocate to donors for greater multilateral funding once more. Or, it can work with the trend and adopt a number of strategies to nonetheless ensure it can still adequately monitor.

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[19] Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) agencies in order of size of income: Oxfam GB, British Red Cross, Save the Children UK, Help the Aged, Action Aid, Christian Aid, Care International UK, Tearfund, World Vision, Children's Aid Direct, Merlin.

[20] Harvey Redgrave, Humanitarian Exchange 23. March 2003

[21] UNHCR NGO Liaison Unit

[22] MSF International receives only 1% of its funds from the UN; CARE 2%; figures from UNHCR NGO Liaison Unit

[23] According to Macrae, DAC statistics show that between 1996-1999 multilateral funding increased by 32%; bilateral by 150%

52.   At present, UNHCR finds itself in the unfortunate position of being perceived as less accountable than the NGOs, who "have been fleeter of foot than the UN in responding to donor's demands for enhanced accountability and performance[24]" through initiatives such as Sphere, the HAP and the Code of Conduct. This is not at all to say that programme performance of the NGOs is assumed to be of adequate quality, or that UNHCR has no business in the quality of NGO services[25], but that increased control and scrutiny by UNHCR are unlikely strategies for successfully increasing the organisation's capacity to monitor the refugees.

53.   NGOs interviewed commented on the need for UNHCR to recognise their common ground and share the burden. UNHCR staff were sometimes defensive and preoccupied with covering their backs rather than tackling problems in partnership. This is understandable, particularly when staff have had to contend with considerable criticism levied by NGOs as a result of UNHCR's budget shortfalls. Nonetheless, monitoring in partnership is a two-way process; that implies that UNHCR staff need to be open to (constructive) criticism from its partners and to sharing its problems.

54.   Maximising partnership and demonstrating its "additionality" must act as the complements to developments in monitoring tools described here and elsewhere in this evaluation. Professional competence, negotiation skills, attitude and interpersonal skills indeed count as much, if not more, than the tools at UNHCR's disposal for monitoring.

55.   NGOs interviewed for this evaluation unanimously referred to the importance of the competence and attitude of UNHCR staff. Being monitored by staff without the appropriate technical and programme knowledge and experience was strongly criticised as was the tendency of some towards a certain arrogance. According to an Inspections Report commenting on interviews with NGOs, "several said that UNHCR's monitoring was mechanical, and focused on detail rather than on objectives and desired outputs"[26]. An emphasis on quality and an attitude of constructive criticism founded on professional expertise and competence was welcomed by NGOs interviewed for this evaluation; several stated they would like more of these monitoring visits. Good advice, fair criticism - accompanied by praise when deserved - is viewed as a constructive monitoring role.

56.   UNHCR has long recognised the need for and value of partnership. It is emphasised in its core reference, the *UNHCR Manual;* the updating of the *Partnership Handbook* is partial testimony to the awareness that UNHCR can greatly enhance its capacity through partnership and its efforts "to renew a culture of partnership throughout the organization". The role of joint strategic planning has been raised as a crucial component of UNHCR's ability to access monitoring information: if all partners shared in the process of planning, developing a shared country plan based on shared needs assessments, this optimises all partners' capacity and willingness to

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[24] Macrae 2002

[25] Whether UNHCR is right to assume that "Given the overall low level of assistance in many refugee camps, due to under funding of UNHCR" (*UNHCR 2004* my underlining) and if "UNHCR's financial position is a reliable proxy indicator of the ability of refugees to gain access to appropriate assistance and protection" or not is beyond the scope of this paper.

[26] *Observations from Inspections 1999-2001*

subsequently share information and monitoring responsibilities.[27]   A recent memorandum from the High Commissioner stresses the importance of strengthened collaboration with partners including "to better institutionalize participatory programming practices"[28].

57.   The broader UN context of greater partnership means that it is a good time for UNHCR to demonstrate its ability to work in partnership and bring value to the monitoring of other's interventions. It may also be able to build on opportunities referred to by Macrae that (anecdotally) donors will tire of the administrative burden of multiple bilateral contracts.

58.   At present, UNHCR faces dilemmas, only partially of its own making. It knows it must increase its monitoring capacity, but is suffering funding cuts that limit its ability to address training needs and systems development. It is accountable for monitoring the refugees, yet has an increasingly small share of the market and concomitantly less authority to demand information. The cost of administering its sub-agreements has remained high, whilst its programme funding (and caseload) has reduced[29].

59.   Yet there is no escaping the fact that with less control over the interventions of other humanitarian actors, UNHCR needs to increase its monitoring capacity in the field and its ability to read the broader context and fill in the gaps remaining from a splintered picture of protection and assistance. How can UNHCR increase its monitoring capacity in the face of funding cuts?

Strategies and recommendations for enhancing monitoring with partners

Enhancing the capacity of partners to monitor

60.   Increasing the capacity of partners is an indirect way for UNHCR to monitor more effectively. Many partners themselves have little experience of monitoring and programme management. According to an evaluation of UNHCR's training for implementing partners, no more than 10% of partners with whom UNHCR had sub-agreements between 1996-1998 received any training despite the fact that "Training has a pivotal role to play in combining the attainment of organizational goals with improved performance of UNHCR's partners" yet "the development of a …consistent training programme for operational partners and government counterparts has remained elusive". The evaluation, distressingly, points out that several positive initiatives "have not been sustained or followed up"[30] including proposals made at the same time as the PARinAC process such as a policy document *Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness* which included the need to identify "core competencies for national NGO implementing partners".

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[27] The Kenya exercise is specifically acclaimed in the NGO Statement on Programme and Funding made to the Standing Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (27 Meeting), 24-26 June 2003.

[28] IOM/FOM 48/2003, 24 July 2003 "Better meeting the needs of refugees through strengthened collaboration with operational partners".

[29] UNHCR's budget allocated to implementing partners has gone down 40% in the last 8 years; at the same time the number of partners has gone up by 22%, to 743 partners in 2002

[30] Groot, F. 2000 UNHCR

61.   Funding was not secured. Reasons are the "absence of a clear stakeholder who might have continued developing a partner training strategy" and an inappropriate linking of training with that of its own staff, where relationships, authority and needs are different.

62.   In the current funding climate with UNHCR already hard pressed to train its own staff, it is unlikely that more funds will become available for training partners. Nor perhaps should they; it has been pointed out that capacity building weak NGOs is a long-term project more properly the domain of the international NGOs (who are often engaged in capacity building anyway). At any rate, UNHCR cannot shoulder the burden alone and should call upon development partners to support such activities, using its particular expertise in protection to contribute coaching and, if staffing levels permit, training in protection to long-term partner staff.   This evaluation can only echo many of the recommendations made by Groot, to develop a coherent strategy, clear responsibilities, increasing the (coaching) capacity of the programme officers and protection and field officers and finally to "identify whether more effective solutions than training can be found to deal with problems of non-compliance and performance".

63.   Other considerations for UNHCR would be to continue or increase support for existing training networks such as Reach Out and Sphere, reducing the training burden on UNHCR and potentially reducing costs.

Value-added

64.   As further discussed in Chapter 3, UNHCR should concentrate on enhancing its particular value-added by investing resources in creating monitoring "additionality":

> ➢ a strategic monitoring role that builds on current initiatives to develop a monitoring system that will enable UNHCR field staff to collect and synthesise contextual monitoring information, complement partner's monitoring with periodic beneficiary-based monitoring, collect partner's monitoring information and collate, analyse and communicate it, thus offering a service of value to other actors and a more comprehensive picture of the status of refugees

> ➢ emphasise UNHCR's role as the "standard-bearer" of humanitarian standards and norms for refugees and people of concern[31]

Improving efficiency

65.   UNHCR's role as a donor, notwithstanding moves towards partnership and mutual respect, is still bound by legal, financial and moral accountability.   To improve its capacity to monitor partners and to ensure adequate proximity to the

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[31] see OCHA 2003 *Changes in Humanitarian Financing*. "The UN system's value-added in dealing with humanitarian crises centres on five core components: 1) upholding humanitarian principles; 2) fostering and promoting norms and standards; 3) coordinating the efforts of humanitarian actors; 4) assessing the needs of the affected; and 5) monitoring humanitarian operations. The *standard-bearer* model seeks to strengthen each of these five components

refugees within a reduced funding context implies the need for greater efficiency. The management issues associated with weaknesses in accountability is discussed in Chapter 5, *Monitoring and the Management Framework in UNHCR.*

66.   Strategies associated specifically with partners include:

> ➢ More efficient and regular reporting (logframe, analytical, short narrative, monthly)

> ➢ Making fuller use of workplans as a monitoring basis

> ➢ Consideration of ways of reducing the administrative burden associated with SPMRs. This may include types of framework agreements where monitoring accountabilities are stated, but the partner is trusted to perform following a field assessment of implemented capacity. Progress monitoring becomes more like exception-reporting (i.e. it is assumed that progress is going according to plan, and only reported if it is not)

> ➢ Increased staff capacity to carry out organisational assessments of partners, including the ability to assess the adequacy of their monitoring systems

> ➢ Targeting through problem-orientated monitoring (having identified weaknesses, UNHCR staff increase the levels of support, supervision and surveillance to those partners)

> ➢ A concomitant reduction in monitoring of partners assessed as competent (a trust model that is periodically checked for continued relevance, but is low intensity)

> ➢ Greater coordination of monitoring within the UNHCR teams (there are reports that staff carry out separate monitoring trips that could be combined and more integrated)

> ➢ Increased delegation of authority to UNHCR officers to make adaptations to sub-agreements (up to an agreed limit and using agreed criteria) to avoid a bottleneck in senior staff

> ➢ Circulate sub-agreements electronically to facilitate speedy mechanisms for agreement and, subsequently, adaptations in the light of monitoring feedback

> ➢ Relatedly, ensure that programme staff can delegate financial detail to finance staff and focus attention on programme quality

Optimising partnership

> ➢ UNHCR continues to promote the spirit and action of partnership amongst its staff (mutual respect, shared problem solving and monitoring)

> ➢ Increases its involvement with joint initiatives such as participatory strategic planning with partners, the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the Consolidated Appeal Process, including participating in endeavours to improve them and to make

them more relevant to humanitarian assistance. This should include the development of appropriate joint monitoring mechanisms

➢ Lobbies donors to include, in their bilateral contracts with partners, the requirement to participate in UNHCR's coordination mechanisms and provide monitoring information to UNHCR as appropriate. OFDA already does this stating that "OFDA will not fund organizations that do not share programmatic data and information with appropriate humanitarian information co-ordination bodies in the field"[32].

➢ Builds on existing tools and partner's mechanisms wherever possible, for example by wholeheartedly adopt Sphere as the common assistance standards used in its monitoring.

Staff

67.   Finally, the common factor to all strategies is the importance of UNHCR staff competence and adequate numbers of skilled staff. Little can be achieved in terms of monitoring partners without professionally competent staff able to assess, monitor and support their partners in every sector, and establish constructive working relationships that enable them to access voluntary information. Investments in staff capacity must not be the primary casualty of the present funding cuts.

➢ As discussed in Chapter 3, develop a rough ratio of programme size in relation to numbers of staff (per sector) to ensure that all sectors are adequately monitored and supported by specialist and technical staff. Programmes unable to achieve these benchmarks should seriously reconsider their capacity to adequately monitor and support partner's programmes

➢ Emphasise the importance of negotiation skills, attitudes of partnership and interpersonal skills in all staff

➢ Establish regular field visits as a performance target for UNHCR officers

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[32] USAID/OFDA 2002 guidelines, quoted in ALNAP 2003

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Chapter 7   Monitoring in other agencies

1.   This paper looks at the monitoring systems, issues and challenges faced by other agencies than UNHCR.   No attempt has been made to evaluate their monitoring capacity, however full use is made of secondary sources that do so, notably the ALNAP study which examines some thirteen agencies in *Strengthening Monitoring in the Humanitarian Sector*, carried out over a period of two months for its 2003 Review.   In addition, views were canvassed through interviews for this evaluation;[1] and the tools and guidelines developed by selected agencies, specifically WFP, UNICEF, CIDA, ICRC, CARE (U.S.), Oxfam GB and IRC are examined.

2.   Notwithstanding the organisational and contextual variations of each agency's monitoring capacity, many of the challenges faced by UNHCR in institutionalising good quality monitoring systems and practice are shared by all the agencies reviewed here and elsewhere.

The tools of the trade

3.   As the ALNAP review comments, most agencies have developed guidelines for monitoring (and evaluation).   This is particularly so of recent years.   A brief description of selected tools is followed by a synopsis of challenges and best practice in the sector at present.

WFP

4.   In 2003, WFP produced its *Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines* on CD, also available on WFP's intranet. Totalling nearly 400 pages the guidelines, which were field tested and adapted before finalisation, cover every component of the monitoring and evaluation cycle.   The 14 modules include explanations of Results Based Management and its link to the programme planning basis (logical frameworks, designing indicators etc), data collection techniques (quantitative and qualitative from survey types to beneficiary based monitoring), analysis, reporting and so on[2]. All aspects of the cycle are covered and the modules presented in such a way as to link to each stage of the cycle and to related subjects.   They also act as stand alone modules for a particular area of interest.   Of the 14 modules, 11 are related to monitoring.

5.   This is an accessible and thorough set of guidelines that would supply the full range of techniques and tools required to establish and maintain the basis of a good monitoring system.   The guidelines were produced this year; too early for WFP to evaluate the extent to which it is used and is having an impact on WFP's monitoring quality.   However, this kind of generic tool is a valuable foundation and one which UNHCR should consider.

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[1] Agencies interviewed regarding their own systems were ICRC, OCHA, IRC and Oxfam. Monitoring tools of other NGOs were also examined in the field

[2] According to the ALNAP study discussed below, WFP are currently trying to design a single country report that will meet a variety of reporting needs, thus streamlining and reducing reporting pressures on field staff

UNICEF

6.   UNICEF first produced a monitoring and evaluation resource in 2000. Updated in 2003, the *UNICEF M&E Training Resource* is, like WFP's, available on CD. Unlike WFP, the resource is designed to act as both a self-directed learning tool and as a trainer's toolkit.   Each of the seven modules therefore contains a series of "core content sheets" for users as well as facilitators notes and overheads for trainers.   The resource is also extremely comprehensive, covering the entire monitoring and evaluation cycle, different approaches to data collection and links with UNICEF's programme cycle.   It includes several management-related issues such as the importance of disseminating the information as opposed to simply distributing it.

7.   UNICEF's resource is also a valuable tool for UNHCR to examine; between them, UNICEF and WFP have the generic tools and techniques of monitoring amply covered.   Also of value to consider is UNICEF's institutional approach to planning (the IMEP[3]) that explicitly integrates monitoring into its five year and annual programme plans.

8.   UNICEF is currently intensifying the dissemination and associated training of its M&E resource, initially targeting its Monitoring and Evaluation Officers present in roughly a third of its offices.   Other offices have M&E focal points of varying seniority and experience.   Like UNHCR, UNICEF's experience with traditional training techniques such as workshops has been variable and alternatives, such as secondments and self-directed learning, are limited by a country office and individual's workload.   As a result, UNICEF is experimenting with a focused on-the-job coaching approach to reach country offices in unstable contexts and chronic emergencies, twinned with a longer term strategy to increase its regional training M&E capacity to reach all COs. UNICEF has trained a core of external consultants as a resource for on-the-job M&E coaching; UNHCR could usefully consult with UNICEF on progress and impact once the initiative has got fully underway.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

9.   OCHA does not have monitoring in its mandate, has no generic indicators for the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and instead recommends Sphere for technical sectors.

10.   In 1998, OCHA proposed the development of monitoring guidelines. This was rejected by the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), a decision revisited in 2002 when a plan of action includes the development of guidelines for strategic monitoring to "improve impact analysis of the CAP in order to demonstrate the impact of under-funding, and to standardise mechanisms for accountability".   The Action Plan also suggests that the IASC Sub-Working Group (SWG) on CAP and the IASC Working Group solicit practice reports from the field, HQ and humanitarian practitioners and academics.   These reports would be used to collate and develop guidelines and select CAPs for an in-depth joint review with donor participation. The focus would be on the consequences of under funding and to implement the IASC SWG evaluation of the CAP.

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[3] Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

11.   CIDA's *Guide to Self-Assessment and Monitoring* is intended to complement other CIDA technical monitoring guidelines and its extensive results-based policy documents and materials. Like most other tools it is based on the logical framework, explaining the logic and components. Usefully, it links to a performance measurement framework and a management information system, emphasising the inter-relationship of what is being monitored, what is being collected and how it will be analysed (e.g. by database) and communicated.

ICRC

12.   ICRC's relatively new planning framework, 'Planning for Results', (PfR) affirms its commitment to fully integrating its protection and assistance activities, an interdisciplinary approach to project design and implementation which is one of the foundations of the PfR planning methodology.[4]   The PfR was part of important management changes in ICRC, which included the creation of the Planning, Policy and Evaluation Unit and the introduction of a new financial management system for budgeting and accounting.   Both performance management and financial management are now interdependent at each level of the management cycle. The PfR establishes the link between objectives/results and budgets/resources, and a clear attribution of the responsibilities for decision-making, results and resources to specific people.

PfR starts with a Situation Analysis followed by a Problem Analysis, of which there are up to eight, one for each main target population.   Each problem analysis document sets out the priorities for ICRC action for the target (and sub-target) population and the desired impact. The PfR follows a logical framework-type of objectives hierarchy, tiered from an overall General Objective through Specific Objectives with indicators for both levels. The former also includes project status comments (i.e. new, ahead of schedule, behind schedule etc). The project description form is standardized and includes the description of the project, who is responsible for implementing it, its budget, and its various levels of accountability. There is also a Plan of Action, which is a supporting document for monitoring as it contains a detailed breakdown of the tasks/activities and resources necessary for the achievement of the results as defined in the objectives. All the planning documents, annual exercises and budget extensions and reductions are contained in a PfR database.

13.   The introduction of the PfR was not without difficulties. It took between three to five years to stabilise the change throughout the organization and involved extensive training and headquarters oversight. The ICRC believes it has been a positive exercise. The PfR planning exercise is participatory, involving all delegates, in itself a positive impact along with the ability to assess ICRC's performance more systematically.

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[4] The 'Planning for Results Guidelines', revised June 2001, explain that PfR is part of a broader concept of "New public Management' that is used in other humanitarian agencies and UN organizations.

14.   One of ICRC's priorities for 2004 is to improve its overall monitoring capability and specifically to work on how ICRC can better determine the impact of its interventions.   As part of that exercise, ICRC is currently working on a set of 'protection' indicators, which has proved to be a complex exercise, meeting some resistance in house by those who feel that protection issues cannot be quantified. Other established monitoring systems include the keeping of records on every individual who it has assisted and for whom the ICRC needs to follow-up. It uses a computer programme standardized across the organisation for this form of mapping.

15.   In 2001 a new field reporting system was introduced, designed to establish coherent links between narrative reports, progress reports, statistical data and financial figures to support monitoring.   When the PfR was first introduced, the planning documents and reports were very uneven. A number of problems that seem to plague UNHCR reports were also observable in the ICRC's documents such as overly lengthy narratives, imprecise objectives and indicators, and lack of continuity between the planning document and the subsequent reports. Training and headquarters oversight and feedback to field offices has apparently led to significant improvements. Following an internal debate about whether a sitrep should be an activity report or an exception report, a compromise was struck, allowing both but stipulating that if a staff member reported on going to a meeting, the staff person had to attach minutes of the meeting. This essentially acts as a disincentive to include trivial activities.

16.   Donor Monitoring: ICRC limits donor visits to the field. The 'donor support club' (donor's who give more than 10 million Swiss francs per year) are offered two trips annually.   The donors visit in a group and write up one report of their observations. ICRC believes this has been a positive way to engage donors more directly in its work in the field and benefit from their feedback without overburdening field offices.

17.   ICRC's robustness with donors and its performance management system interlinking programme, objective and finance are of particular interest to UNHCR. The shared challenge of monitoring protection and ICRC's development of a finance-linked performance management system suggests that UNHCR should make full use of opportunities to share approaches and systems with ICRC, particularly at this time of management system development.

The NGOs

18.   NGOs' monitoring systems are typically project-based. This narrower focus makes the systems of more limited value to UNHCR in its monitoring development efforts. Nonetheless, it is useful for UNHCR to be aware of examples of the existing NGO state of the art in monitoring systems; aspects of particular note are described.

OXFAM GB

19.   Oxfam's *Emergency Response Manual* is a combination of best practice guide and toolkit. It contains policy, formats and checklists for all stages of the programme cycle including the logical framework planning, assessment checklists, suggested indicators for each sector and sitrep reporting templates which include formats of

reporting progress against the planned objectives and indicators. It does not address the analysis stage of the monitoring cycle; data collection methods are contained in a separate manual. The manual is approximately a hundred pages long (not including appendices) with around 12 pages dedicated to components of the monitoring cycle. It is available on hardcopy and CD. Although aimed at detailed and sector-specific monitoring hence less applicable to the role of UNHCR staff, of value is its practical field-based approach, accessibility (easy to use but comprehensive checklists) and brevity.

CARE USA

20.   CARE USA has various guidelines for programme planning and implementation, including monitoring. Of note are *Impact Guidelines* developed in 1999 in recognition of the particular challenge associated with measuring "sustainable improvements in human conditions". Also of note is that the guidelines were developed as part of a process which used field practice as its starting point. Field best practice case studies were used and staff representing those projects invited to a workshop; an output of that workshop was a checklist of best practice that subsequently became recommended standards for demonstrating impact. The result is a set of guidelines covering programme design (goals, objectives, designing indicators) and an extensive set of proposed indicators for nine sectors.

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

21.   In the late 1990s, the IRC began to develop a programme planning framework called the Causal Pathway to strengthen its programme planning, monitoring and evaluation exercises.[5] Using this framework it developed the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM & E) system now in use in all its operations. Programme design follows a standard cycle from assessment to design, including developing a monitoring plan with measurable indicators.

22.   The manual is comprehensive and includes setting up a monitoring schedule, establishing a plan for data collection and analysis and, like WFP, assigning responsibilities to a particular team or individual. The plan also includes the costs of monitoring and the need to share lessons learned with colleagues and beneficiary populations.

23.   The guidelines do not provide detailed instructions for how to monitor and this is an area the agency may develop.

Other Mechanisms - The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)

24.   A review of the CAP, commissioned by OCHA, was carried out in 2002 (Porter, 2002) and noted that "the UN is not demonstrating the positive impact on beneficiaries of either projects that are funded or the negative impact on beneficiaries

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[5] 'Causal' because it is based on the premise that activities should logically cause desirable results to occur, and 'pathway' because these should proceed in a technically and programmatically sound progression. See IRC, *The IRC Causal Pathway Framework: A Guide to Program Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*, revised July 2001

on projects that are not. Strategic monitoring is an area poorly served by the structure of the CAP, as agencies tend to submit mid-term and final reports on their individual projects, rather than against the sectoral and strategic objectives". The review comments that the weaknesses in monitoring found in CAP simply mirrored those in the humanitarian community generally; "It is not possible, for example, for those involved with a

25.   CAP to demonstrate the impact of under funding, when there are no systems in place in a country to demonstrate impact, full stop". UNHCR is not alone.

The challenges: common ground with UNHCR

26.   The ALNAP Annual Review 2003 notes that "a common theme of the ..ALNAP Annual Reviews is the weakness of monitoring systems and lack of adequate monitoring information". This is not to say that tools don't exist. The Sphere Project study has shown that even the 20 NGOs who are piloting Sphere have been slow to incorporate the standards into their monitoring. Despite the fact that 50% referred to Sphere standards in their proposals, only 25% used them to monitor.

27.   ALNAP's study on monitoring found that whilst many agencies may have guidelines, manuals and toolkits, there is "a growing gap between theory and practice". Agencies face a number of common constraints that strike a powerful resonance in UNHCR. They are summarised below.

Management issues

28.   Similar to UNHCR, the study notes that field staff are overloaded with demands for information and additional monitoring pressures "agencies, in particular the UN agencies, are also being required to monitor against a range of international protocols and commitments, for example gender equality and human rights." Additionally the welcome "concern for the protection of civilians also opens new dimensions that need to be monitored even in conventional food relief programmes."

29.   Significantly there tends to be a link between a well-functioning monitoring system and the feedback capacity of the organisation. If staff saw monitoring information being used, and reports commented on, motivation and therefore implementation of monitoring is likely to be higher.

30.   Relatedly, monitoring was insufficiently valued and "the perception of many people interviewed for this study is that monitoring is seen as a relatively low priority occupation". Field staff themselves often perceive monitoring as no more than a process of data collection and reporting for others, rather than a useful programme quality and management tool. The study notes four key management behaviours that enhance monitoring:

➢   high quality data that is seen to be used (analysed, feedback given)

➢   an organisational culture that values monitoring

> ➤ incentives given to staff to monitor (positive performance reviews, even financial)

> ➤ delegated authority to act on the information

Staff

31.   National field staff, who often are those who have the most contact with the beneficiaries, are unlikely to speak the agency's reporting language (i.e. a European language) as a first language. Writing in that language is then a barrier to full communication. Furthermore there is a tendency of staff to be reluctant to record negative findings for fear of displeasing their superiors. Less of the informal, yet valuable, information is therefore passed on.

32.   Interpreting and communicating qualitative information is a skill that many staff feel they do not possess. Analysis is therefore reduced and qualitative data is either not communicated, or is communicated in lengthy narratives that are inaccessible.

Using the tools in the field

33.   The study found that although the log frame is heavily used at the beginning and end of a project (for project proposals and then again for evaluations). Its potential as a monitoring tool during the project was rarely utilised.

Analysis and communication of information

34.   UNHCR is not alone in struggling with how to analyse and communicate information; the study found that there was "a tendency to collect and report on large amounts of data that is relatively meaningless insofar as it discloses very little about results and impacts"; indeed it appeared that as a result a lot of decisions were taken on the basis of more informal communication routes. "Anecdotal evidence suggests that in fact formal monitoring systems either fail to provide information in a form that can be used by managers, or that it is not analysed and summarised in a user-friendly format within the tight timescale required for decision making[6]".

35.   ALNAP recommends that agencies consider:

> ➤ reviewing planning and monitoring systems for effectiveness

> ➤ review the incentives to staff to monitor

> ➤ review monitoring's fit in the organisation structure (integration)

Conclusions

36.   This brief review of monitoring in other agencies demonstrates some key issues. Firstly, UNHCR is behind the field somewhat in its development of an

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[6] ALNAP 2003

overall monitoring system toolkit. The accessibility and comprehensiveness of some of the CD-based guidelines would be useful for field staff as an easy and informed source of the why, the who and the how of monitoring.

37. Secondly, the review demonstrates that, better systems and tools notwithstanding, all agencies still face considerable challenges to good monitoring. It takes a long time to implement what is often not only a new system, but a new way of thinking and a changed organisational culture. The same pattern of weak management support for monitoring, limited staff skills and capacity, system and work overload and excessive (and inefficient) reporting combines with a hierarchical approach that bottlenecks decision-making with overly senior managers and fails to encourage staff to monitor through rewarding them for delivering "bad" but important news, along with the good news.

38. In other words, UNHCR shares the same problems as most agencies. Whether to a greater or lesser degree is beyond the scope of this study, however the challenges are by no means unique to UNHCR and hence the solutions partly found in collaboration and shared lesson-learning.

39. This review recommends that:

➢ UNHCR turns its attention to the tools of other agencies in order to facilitate its own development

➢ Discusses challenges and successes with other UN agencies and with ICRC in particular in order to share information on protection monitoring and management information systems

➢ Considers producing a similar CD-based generic monitoring guideline

➢ Encourages its field staff to familiarise themselves with the monitoring guidelines of their partners, in order to encourage, or insist upon, their use.

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Abbreviations

ACF	Action contre la Faim
AHC	Assistant High Commissioner
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
APR	Annual Protection Report
ARC	Action for the Rights of the Child
ARC	American Refugee Committee
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDA	Community Development Approach
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CO	Country Office
CR	Country Report
COP	Country Operations Plans
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CSU	Community Services Unit
DAC	Development Aid Committee
DCI	Division of Communication and Information
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DfID	Department for International Development
DHC	Deputy High Commissioner
DHRM	Department of Human Resource Management
DIP	Department of International Protection
DME	Design Monitoring and Evaluation
DOS	Division of Operational Support
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EESS	Engineering and Environmental Services Section
EIF	Environmental Indicator Framework
EPAU	Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
ExCom	Executive Committee
GIS	Geographic Information System
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Project
HCDS	Health and Community Development Section
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Interagency Standing Committee
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGO	Inspector General's Office
IMEP	Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
IOM/FOM	Internal Office Memorandum/Field Office Memorandum
IP	Implementing Partner
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOV	Means of Verification
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
MSRP	Management Systems Renewal Project
MUAC	Middle Upper Arm Circumference
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMLP	Operations Management Learning Programme
OMS	Operations Management System
PARinAC	Partnership in Action
PCOS	Programme Co-ordination and Operations Support Section
PfR	Planning for Results
PHC	Primary Health Care
PLP	Protection Learning Programme
PMW	Protection Management Workshop
POP	People-oriented Planning
POS	Protection Operations Support Section
RBM	Results-based Management
RNIS	Report on the Nutrition Situation of Refugees and Displaced Populations
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SCF	Save the Children
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SitRep	Situation Report
SPMR	Sub-Project Monitoring Report
SWG	Sub-working group
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WatSan	Water and Sanitation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation