

Draft: check against delivery

**'UNHCR's new Policy Development and Evaluation Service:
Some frequently asked questions'**

**Presentation by Jeff Crisp,
Head, Policy Development and Evaluation Service**

**57th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee
2-6 October 2006**

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to present for your consideration document number AC.96/1029, 'Reports relating to evaluation and inspection: evaluation and policy development'.

As that document points out, since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, a Policy Development and Evaluation Service, PDES, has been established in UNHCR, replacing the former Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, EPAU. This is a recent development. The document before you was prepared before the formal establishment of the new Service, and the first two appointments to PDES, including my own, were made just a month ago. Additional appointments will be made before the end of the year.

During the past month, I have had the opportunity to undertake informal consultations with a number of Executive Committee members, with our UN and NGO partners and with a cross-section of UNHCR colleagues. The conclusion I have drawn from those consultations is that there is a considerable degree of interest in the role and functions of PDES, but that there is also a demand for additional information about the new Service.

I hope that I will be able to meet some of those demands in my brief presentation today, which I have titled 'UNHCR's new Policy Development and Evaluation Service: some frequently asked questions'. More specifically, I would like to address eight of the queries which have been posed to me most frequently over the past month. There may well be additional questions which you wish to ask, and I will, of course, be most happy to respond to them in the discussion that will follow this presentation.

Allow me, then, to address eight of the most frequently asked questions about UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service.

Question 1: How does Policy Development and Evaluation Service differ from the former Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit?

As the titles of the two entities suggest, there is a considerable degree of continuity in the role and responsibilities of PDES and the former EPAU. I also hope that the new Service will maintain many of the characteristics of EPAU, such as a rigorous respect for the

principles of independence, transparency and integrity; a commitment to the use of innovative approaches and methodologies; and a determination to provide you with documents that are presented in comprehensible and jargon-free language. At the same time, I would like to underline some of the differences between PDES and EPAU, most notably the fact that the new Service reports directly to the High Commissioner and forms part of his Executive Office; that the PDES is staffed at a more senior level than was the case with EPAU, and that the new Service has been given an enhanced role in the formulation, articulation and dissemination of UNHCR policy. Indeed, one of our first tasks will be to undertake a comprehensive review of the policymaking process within UNHCR, and we look forward to discussing that initiative with you in due course.

Question 2: Will the new Service focus primarily on policy development, or on evaluation?

In response to that question, I would like to point out that we regard policy development and evaluation as two sides of the same coin, and we will not be making a strict differentiation between them in terms of our staffing, budget and work programme. UNHCR policies will be developed on the basis of the findings and recommendations that emanate from evaluations, while the terms of reference for the evaluations that we undertake will generally be oriented to key operational policy issues. We do not plan to undertake conventional country programme evaluations that examine and assess the whole range of UNHCR activities in a given country or region. With respect to policy development, the primary concern of PDES will be to ensure policy coherence and consistency, to provide quality control to the policymaking process and to focus on cross-cutting and emerging global issues that go beyond the remit of any single entity within UNHCR. In this respect, we will, of course, be working in close consultation with UNHCR's other departments, divisions and bureaux.

Question 3: How will the PDES work programme be established?

The PDES work programme will be aligned with UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives, will contribute to the formulation of those objectives and will also assist the organization to assess the extent to which those objectives are being achieved. A considerable proportion of the PDES work programme will be demand-driven, responding to specific requests from the High Commissioner, senior management, the Executive Committee and our operational partners. We will also seek to respond to changing events and developments in the field. In that respect I would like to draw your attention to a Real Time Evaluation mission to Lebanon and Syria, which was undertaken last week and which reported its findings to the High Commissioner and senior management within 24 hours of returning from the field. The report of that evaluation will be made available to you shortly. While we recognize that certain Executive Committee members would like the new Service to establish a three or even a five-year work programme, it is not our current intention to pursue that approach. Instead, we will be establishing a rolling work programme that is reviewed and revised every six months, in order to retain a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness in our activities.

Question 4: How will the new policy development and evaluation function relate to other functions, such as inspection, investigation and audit?

We recognize that some organizations within and outside the United Nations have seen a value in combining such functions in a single entity that is responsible for oversight and accountability. UNHCR has chosen not to adopt that approach. We prefer to situate policy development and evaluation within the context of organizational learning and knowledge management, rather than in the context of oversight and accountability. At the same time, we recognize the need to ensure effective communication and coordination between the inspection, audit and evaluation functions, and to ensure that the respective role of these different functions is clearly articulated.

Question 5: How will UNHCR's policy development and evaluation activities be related to the institutionalization of Results Based Management (RBM)?

In answering this question, I would like to make reference to RBM as a *philosophy* and to RBM as a *methodology*. In terms of philosophy, the objectives of RBM and the objectives of PDES are mutually reinforcing: both seek to ensure that UNHCR's fulfils its mandate for protection and solutions in as effective and efficient a manner as possible. Another key component of RBM is to strengthen the way in which UNHCR formulates, disseminates and implements policy at the strategic and global level, and in that respect, there are also important synergies to be exploited in relation to the work of PDES. In terms of methodology, we expect the institutionalization of RBM, and the concomitant strengthening of UNHCR's monitoring and reporting systems, to generate data and analysis that will be of substantial value to the policy development and evaluation function. At the same time, I would take this opportunity to express some caution in relation to the extent to which the impact of UNHCR's policies and programmes can be quantified and expressed in terms of measurable indicators. More specifically, I would like to suggest that quantifiable indicators must be employed in tandem with qualitative assessments and, indeed, with the careful collection and analysis of anecdotal evidence.

Question 6: What will PDES do to ensure the effective utilization of evaluation findings and recommendations?

It is no secret to say that this has been an important challenge for UNHCR in recent years – and an area in which the organization's record is somewhat mixed. I hope the Executive Committee will agree that a number of earlier UNHCR evaluations - in areas such as refugee women and children, the community services function, UNHCR's monitoring capacity and the issue of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming – have had a significant impact on the way the organization functions. At the same time, we recognize that other evaluations have had less impact, and that the current mechanisms used to ensure the effective utilization of evaluation findings and recommendations need to be enhanced. We expect the relocation of the evaluation function to the High Commissioner's Executive Office to assist us in that respect. We intend to re-examine the way in which evaluation findings and recommendations are disseminated and incorporated into the organization's planning, programming and reporting procedures. And we count on members of the Executive Committee to share their own evaluation

experience, both positive and negative, with us in this respect. For it is also no secret to say that many of my evaluation colleagues government departments and in bilateral aid organizations are struggling with exactly the same challenge as we face in UNHCR.

Question 7: Does PDES currently have the capacity to fulfil its responsibilities in an effective manner?

The honest answer to this question is “not at the moment... but we are working on it.” There are still unfilled posts in the Service, and we are in any case confronted with a shortage of the evaluative and analytical skills required to staff the new Service - a situation exacerbated by the current freeze on external recruitment. The organization’s budgetary constraints will also limit the extent we are able to draw upon external expertise in the form of independent consultants. We will endeavour to address this issue in a creative manner, by providing training to staff members with the potential to work in the policy development and evaluation function; by drawing upon the experience and expertise to be found in other parts of the organization; and by making strategic use of secondments, internships and partnerships with other organizations.

Question 8: What can Executive Committee members do to support the work of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service?

The new Service is committed to having a regular and open exchange of views with Executive Committee members and other UNHCR partners, and we look forward to engaging in that dialogue with you. Some Excom members have already proposed the establishment of an informal evaluation working group, and we are happy to consider that proposal, on the understanding that such a group is representative of the Excom membership as a whole. In addition, we hope that you will be ready to sit on the Steering Committees that we will establish for major evaluation projects. We would also like you to consider the short-term secondment of policy analysis and evaluation experts to the new Service. Finally, and in the context of the discussion that will follow my presentation, we invite you to make specific proposals for policy analysis and evaluation projects that might be considered for inclusion in our work programme for 2007. Needless to say, we also welcome similar contributions from the NGO partners represented here today.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

A copy of this presentation is available at the back of the conference room and will be posted on the evaluation page of the UNHCR website, under the heading ‘Excom reports on evaluation’. I would be happy to discuss any issues arising from the presentation, both now and at any time in the future. Thank you for your attention.