



# General Assembly

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## Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

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Item (6) of the provisional agenda

### Reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation

## Report on Policy Development and Evaluation

### Report of the High Commissioner

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared in conformity with the decision of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to receive a report on evaluation at its annual plenary session (A/AC.96/1003, para. 25.1 (f) (vi)). The period covered by this report is from mid-2011 to mid-2012.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) is committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects, partnerships and practices. PDES also promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR and encourages an active exchange of information, ideas and analysis between UNHCR and its partners. All of these activities are undertaken with the purpose of strengthening UNHCR's ability to fulfill its mandate in an effective and efficient manner.

## **II. Refugees in urban areas**

2. During the past year, PDES has continued to devote considerable attention to the issue of refugee protection and solutions in urban areas. The Service completed evaluations of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in five countries: Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malaysia and Tajikistan. In addition, PDES undertook a survey of the implementation of the urban refugee policy in 24 countries worldwide and assisted in the establishment of an internal Urban Refugee Steering Group, which it co-chairs with the Division of Programme Management and Support. The Steering Group is organizing a number of missions which will enable UNHCR's sectorial specialists to advise staff members in the field with respect to the implementation of the policy.

## **III. Protracted refugee situations**

3. An important component of the PDES work programme during the reporting period has been the issue of protracted refugee situations. In this context, the Service has completed a series of evaluations examining the long-term UNHCR programmes in Bangladesh, Croatia and Serbia, eastern Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. PDES also organized an expert round table on the protracted Somali displacement crisis and partnered with the World Food Programme in a four-country review of the impact of food aid in protracted refugee situations. In addition, PDES, in association with the UNHCR Secretariat, established a Steering Committee of interested Executive Committee members in relation to the cost and impact of hosting long-term refugee populations.

4. With respect to the related but broader issue of durable solutions, PDES published reports on the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons in Colombia, Liberia, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. The Service commissioned a study of UNHCR's recent efforts to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and development aid, undertook a review of the 'strategic use of resettlement' and joined with the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the International Labour Organization in convening a workshop on the possible incorporation of refugees into labour migration programmes.

## **IV. Emergencies and natural disasters**

5. During the reporting period, PDES undertook a review of UNHCR's response to the Libya crisis, focusing on its response to the emergency in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as a real-time evaluation of the UNHCR emergency operation in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. The Service prepared an internal paper relating to UNHCR's engagement with other humanitarian agencies in refugee emergencies and has been engaged in discussions with other UNHCR entities with respect to the early and systematic evaluation of all new

emergency operations. In association with the Department of International Protection, PDES prepared a review of the protection issues that have arisen in recent natural disasters.

## **V. The changing context of humanitarian action**

6. Recognizing that fundamental changes are taking place in the context of humanitarian action, PDES has been undertaking a review of UNHCR's operating methods in insecure environments and a historical examination of the organization's engagement with non-state armed actors. The Service has continued to contribute to the discourse on 'humanitarian space,' with particular attention to the implications of integrated UN missions for the work of UNHCR and other humanitarian actors.

## **VI. Migration and asylum**

7. Following the publication of a PDES report on the arrival of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe, the Service is planning to undertake a study in Afghanistan, examining the root causes of this mixed migratory movement. At the same time, PDES initiated new research projects on the movement of people from Eritrea to Sudan, and on the movement of the Roma from central to northern Europe. At the time of writing, PDES was planning to undertake a review of UNHCR's role in assisted voluntary return programmes.

## **VII. Younger refugees**

8. During the reporting period, PDES released a global evaluation of the state of refugee education, which has been used as the basis for the development of a new UNHCR education strategy. With generous support from one Executive Committee member, the Service also commissioned an independent review of UNHCR's engagement with refugee youth.

## **VIII. Mental health**

9. At the request of senior management, PDES has initiated two concurrent evaluations relating to the mental health and psycho-social services provided by UNHCR and its partners. The first of these reviews examines the services provided to refugees and other persons of concern, while the second focuses on those made available to UNHCR staff members.

## **IX. Other activities**

10. PDES is partnering with the University of California (Berkeley) Human Rights Center in a review of the 'safe shelter' arrangements provided to survivors and potential victims of sexual and gender-based violence in situations of forced displacement. The Service has also initiated a review of UNHCR policy and practice in relation to the provision of 'incentive payments' to refugees and other beneficiaries.

## **X. Research and publications**

11. A number of PDES staff contributed to the preparation of the 2012 edition of *The State of the World's Refugees*, subtitled 'In Search of Solidarity.' The Service also

prepared two papers on the issue of urban displacement, one of them in association with Cities Alliance, a World Bank affiliate. During the reporting period, PDES published some 25 papers in the series 'New Issues in Refugee Research.' The papers covered a wide range of topics, including 'solidarity resettlement' in Latin America, Europe's response to the asylum crisis in Greece, the role of the African Union in refugee protection, unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Ukraine, the secondary movement of resettled refugees in the United States of America and UNHCR's use of indicators.

## **XI. External and inter-agency evaluations**

12. During the reporting period, PDES devoted an increased amount of time to its role as UNHCR's focal point for external and inter-agency evaluations. In this context, the two most significant initiatives of the year were a global assessment of UNHCR, undertaken by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, which comprises 16 States; and a real-time inter-agency evaluation of the international community's response to the emergencies in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

## **XII. Evaluation capacity**

13. A major challenge confronting PDES is to retain sufficient capacity to respond to the growing policy development and evaluation needs of UNHCR. That capacity was reduced during the reporting period by the departure of a staff member who was kindly seconded to the Service by an Executive Committee member. Staff rotation has also meant that the whole of the PDES team, with the exception of the Head of Service, has changed within a period of less than two years. All of the new staff members have received specialized external training on evaluation objectives and methods. UNHCR's evaluation capacity is currently being reviewed by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services, the report of which will be made available to Executive Committee members.

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