The state of UNHCR's organization culture.

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) is committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects and practices.   EPAU also promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR and encourages an active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policymakers and the research community.   All of these activities are undertaken with the purpose of strengthening UNHCR's operational effectiveness, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to fulfil its mandate on behalf of refugees and other displaced people.   The work of the unit is guided by the principles of transparency, independence, consultation, relevance and integrity.

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Executive summary

"The State of UNHCR's Organization Culture" is the report of a research project undertaken in collaboration between the Staff Development Section and the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit of UNHCR, and the University of Melbourne in Australia. The study was developed independently of any other existing processes or reviews and the data was primarily gathered between November 2003 and April 2004.

The report essentially argues that the culture and climate of this organization have a significant impact on organizational performance and outcomes. Organization culture consists of commonly held overt and unspoken assumptions or understandings that are learned and passed on to new members and which serve as guides to acceptable and unacceptable perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Organization climate refers to employees' perceptions about the way in which their workplace functions, including their experience of, for example, leadership and managerial practices, key policies, interpersonal dynamics and communication, and the emotional tenor of the workplace. With a specific focus upon these elements, the research analysed a wide range of organizational issues from the perspective of their interaction with organization culture, climate and dynamics. Taking this perspective as the central theme, it should be noted that the report does not set out to provide a definitive assessment of the organization as a whole; for example, it does not provide analysis of operations from a technical, financial or political standpoint, although these factors are considered in as much as they infuence or are influenced by organizational culture and climate. Through the discussion and analysis, the report emphasises that lack of attention to cultural factors ensures limited success in any change endeavours, lowers organizational morale and reduces the overall effectiveness of the organization.

The research was conducted utilising a qualitative approach in line with established methodology in the research of culture arising from anthropology and systems psycho-dynamic frameworks. It draws upon ethnographic, in depth interview and participant observation techniques, along with some documentation review. The rigor of the approach lies in the number of people participating in individual or group interviews (over 100), the length of time spent immersed in the organization (around five months in the data gathering phase and a further three months validating the findings) and the number of country operations visited (13, including HQ). A number of staff assisted in the development and refinement of the final report by providing responses to their reading of the first drafts, which were subsequently incorporated into the final product.

In conducting this broad analysis of staff experience and perceptions of UNHCR, the intention has been to provide the organization with additional means by which it may solve some of the persistent problems it faces. The report is presented largely as a resource to augment, inform and tie together other processes and reviews currently underway or being planned. It offers a unique perspective and insights that aim to enable both a greater understanding of the underlying dynamics that currently get in

the way of successful change management and problem solving in many areas, and a broader range of options for planning and the development of strategies for action.

In addition to the specific recommendations summarised below, it is hoped that as a consequence of wide access to the detail of the report, common dynamics and patterns of interaction within the organization, and particularly those that staff find problematic, may be brought to conscious attention and stimulate reflection, discussion and debate. Through heightened awareness of, for example, the roles all members of the organization play in sustaining, creating and perpetuating dynamics that most are unhappy with, it becomes possible on an interpersonal and local level to facilitate some degree of incremental change. It is not sufficient to merely "blame others" either inside or outside the organization, or to locate the responsibility for change solely at the feet of senior management. This report aims to demonstrate how culture is shaped and embedded at every level and sustained by everyone in different ways. From this perspective it is therefore also possible to imagine that, in small and large ways, anyone in the organization has the potential to contribute to a gradual shift of the culture in more positive directions.

Overview of findings

The report discusses a number of organizational strengths that are related to its culture, and emphasises that at the same time that it struggles with conflict and dysfunction, UNHCR is also immensely strong, intelligent and successful. Some key organizational strengths related to culture that are outlined in the report are as follows:

- The mandate

- The commitment and talent of many staff

- Satisfaction with being able to directly help refugees and "make a difference"

- Many strong bonds and positive relationships

- Many talented managers and leaders

- A firm conviction that the organization should and could be doing better

- A common understanding at all levels of the organization's shortcomings

- A high degree of idealism and commitment to the cause

- Skills in dealing with all levels of operations from governmental politics to relationships with refugees

- A strong belief in democracy

- Ability to mobilise resources / emergency capability

- Training and learning

- Diversity

- A high level of capacity to think analytically

UNHCR has a clear core purpose, or "primary task", expressed through its mission statement and its mandate. It achieves this task fully or partially much of the time through the efforts of many talented and skilled staff. As with any other organization, UNHCR also has a number of other secondary and auxiliary tasks that it must attend to in the service of the wider organizational goals. For a number of reasons, these secondary tasks can have a tendency to gain precedence over the actual primary task, distract focus from the core purpose and at times even undermine its achievement, thus contributing to a considerable degree of internal stress and dissatisfaction. In this case, it can be considered that the secondary or auxiliary tasks have gained a prominence disproportionate to the actual primary task, becoming alternative primary tasks. In UNHCR the major alternative primary task appears to be self-perpetuation, with a preoccupation with becoming and remaining "organised". For example, reporting requirements and the complex processes and impact of rotating international staff take significant time and energy away from the core work of safeguarding the rights and well being of refugees.

Much of what gets in the way of the organization achieving its goals and functioning as effectively as it might originates through the anxiety created by the enormity and complexity of the work and the desire to exert some control and predictability over an environment that is extremely difficult to control or predict. For example, the organization must deal with the trauma and desperate circumstances of the refugees in its care, the high expectations of a global community, reflected primarily through donors, complex politics and a high degree of risk where much is at stake. Some of the outcomes of these tensions are as follows:

- UNHCR comprises an uncomfortable mix of two seemingly opposite and incongruent styles of operation. On the one hand it is drawn on many levels to crisis and short term modes of operation that are not always necessary or appropriate and which lead to a lack of effective reflection and long term planning. On the other hand, the organization has developed a bureaucratic style of operation that is in part a result of the organization engaged in the alternative primary task of self-perpetuation and "organization". The evolution of a highly bureaucratic style is an expression of attempts to control and contain. Without a clear thinking through of what should be controlled and contained and in what way, however, this mode of operation largely fails to do this successfully, and instead, for example, impedes UNHCR's ability to adapt sufficiently rapidly to the current environment of competition for funding, slows action and decision making, diffuses accountability and creates a high degree of frustration. Some specific examples of this are as follows;

    - The volume of frameworks, guidelines and reporting requirements imposed by HQ on the field in part represents a response to concern regarding the capabilities of staff and the magnitude of the task, and exacerbates conflict and distance between HQ and the field.

- The organization avoids problems of accountability and poor performance, and along with lack of mechanisms to reward good performance, this undermines its potential.

- The rotation policy as it is currently structured and implemented serves an aspect of the alternative primary task of the organization, that is, to remain preoccupied with the organising of the organization and to distract from achievement of the stated primary task.

- There are many strong and well regarded leaders throughout UNHCR, but as a result of complex organizational dynamics and defences, UNHCR experiences a lack of cohesive leadership, direction and containing authority and leadership is often unclear and undermined at all levels. The scene is set at the senior management level and influences how leadership is taken up and perceived throughout the organization.

- UNHCR has developed some organizational defences against the anxiety created by its primary task that create significant conflict and get in the way of growth, reflection, change and the fulfilment of task. For example;

  - There is a complex relationship between UNHCR workers and refugees, which can cause workers, without adequate training and support, to defend themselves against the very people they are there to assist.

  - An unquestioned underlying assumption in UNHCR that "fairness" should take precedence over most other issues in decision and policy making is an organizational defence and an unachievable aim that leads to the suppression of difference and to the treating of people equally unfairly.

  - Conflict and difference between sub and interest groups across the organization express organizational defences such as splitting, competition and envy, where stories of the "other" reflect, for example, racial and gender stereotypes and perceptions of threat, exclusion and "nepotism".

- The organization fails to adequately meet the support and welfare needs of its staff through managerial, psychological, staff development and organizational support mechanisms.

- The deep level of commitment to the cause and the mandate of the organization, while an underlying strength, also presents a vulnerability to exploitation in terms of personal sacrifice and reduces the incentives within the organization to resolve structural and organizational problems.

- The internal dynamics and relationships of the organization in many ways can be found reproduced in its relationships with donors, implementing partners and peer agencies.

Over the past few years UNHCR has commissioned a number of internal and external reviews on a range of issues of concern to the organization (not necessarily specifically concerned with organization culture), that contain many similar findings

and recommendations to those included in this report. Aspects of organization culture, including many of those discussed in the report, may provide clues as to what often gets in the way of the organization acting upon what it knows to be problematic, even in the face of repeated evidence and the existence of clear recommendations for change. It should be noted also, however, that a number of recent initiatives are aiming to address aspects of organizational functioning raised through this research. The perspectives offered in this report aim to provide some additional resources to assist in the successful implementation of these.

Overview of recommendations

The primary recommendations focus upon five key areas of most relevance to the subject matter. A second section of recommendations included in the main report offers supplementary thoughts and issues of concerns that were raised in the report in less developed format, as a resource. A summary of the recommendations related to the five key areas are as follows:

Leadership and authority

The report argues that it is critical that UNHCR values and supports the development of its leaders and managers, and in particular, the development of a positive managerial culture and a higher consistency of people management skills. Much research in the field of organizations has emphasised the primary impact that improvements in the quality of leadership and management practices have on organizational wellbeing, morale and ultimately, functioning. In the UNHCR context, this could involve for example:

- Increased cohesion at the most senior levels

- High profile support and reinforcement for participation in management learning processes, and at the same time there needs to be a broad ranging approach to the development of management skills that is designed to compliment, while not entirely relying upon, in-house management learning programmes.

- Active supervision and support of leaders and managers in their roles by line managers

- Development of mechanisms to select and "groom" potential managers with the highest degree of aptitude for the role.

Planning and the primary task

Lack of planning and reflection have an impact on outcomes and ability to learn from experience. A greater formalisation and modelling of the value of thinking and planning would institutionalise planning practices further and allow the organization to incorporate much of what it learns through the numerous evaluations and reports generated each year in a more structured and reliable way. It is recommended that UNHCR:

- Develop means by which long range planning and thinking can occur collaboratively at a senior level.

- Use improved planning and reviewing processes to develop clearer parameters and guidance regarding the primary task of the organization.

- Build in formal and regular planning and reflection opportunities throughout various and strategic sections of the organization

- Encourage local managers to enable regular team based reflection and discussion opportunities.

- Ensure that ground level practice informs strategy through opportunities for the field to have input into planning processes

Conflict and competition

There are some approaches that might be used for tackling problems of conflict and competition directly, however, they may also be reduced through a number of indirect means that seek to address underlying causes rather than just the symptoms. Problematic organizational defences, such as conflict and competition, are stimulated by a range of other factors that contribute to a less integrated method of functioning in the organization. Therefore it makes sense to suggest that if some of the source problems can be ameliorated, their negative side effects may also be reduced somewhat. For example through:

- Strengthening of leadership at all levels of the organization as one of the primary interventions, as mentioned above

- Mobilisation of energy around primary task and refocusing the attention of workgroups to more clearly defined goals

- Attention to an increase in accountability mechanisms

- Some sensitisation to racial, gender and sexual stereotyping in the organization.

- Strengthening of staff welfare and support services

Culture of sacrifice

The findings of this research encourage a rethinking of the systems that ask too much of people as both staff and refugees stand to benefit in the long run. Such an aim might be worked towards through, for example:

- Leadership from senior levels to place reasonable boundaries around what people do.

- An acknowledgement of difference within the organization and reflection within appropriate fora regarding ways in which different needs and life stages might be accommodated more effectively.

- A challenging of many of the underlying assumptions, such as "everyone should be exactly the same" and dynamics that restrict thinking and options.

- Addressing the need for some form of career management structures.

- Greater access to staff welfare services, as mentioned above, and taking up of the findings regarding health problems in the organization may assist people to find more ways to balance their own needs with those of the organization.

Relationships with refugees

There needs to be a greater degree of support within the organization for the development of skills in managing the face-to-face challenges of working with refugees, rather than relying upon a belief that good will and a passion for the work is enough. Through, for example:

- Establishing policy and an expectation that all workers with hands on roles with refugees are given access to regular supervision and support by their managers

- Possible establishment of team or peer support and skill development strategies, such as a buddy system, regular team discussion / reflection opportunities

- Ensuring that all staff who work for UNHCR in hands on roles have access to training and education regarding managing refugee relationships and situations of trauma, aggression, etc.

Introduction

"Everyone takes the limits of (their) own vision for the limits of the world."
- Arthur Schopenhauer

1.   This report presents the findings of a research project that was undertaken between November 2003 and May 2004. As well as a discreet project carried out for UNHCR, it forms part of a doctoral research project I am undertaking with the University of Melbourne in Australia.

Aims

The broad aims of the project were outlined as follows:

2.   This research project represents a collaboration between the Staff Development Section and the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. The project will investigate UNHCR organization culture and consider how it influences such factors as organizational performance, outcomes, learning and ability to implement and adapt to change. Utilizing qualitative and quantitative methodology across HQ and field settings, such as analysis of learning programme worksheet data and organizational documentation, interviews and participant observation, it will explore a range of cultural facets of the organization with a particular emphasis upon patterns of communication and interaction. This emphasis serves a broad aim to gain a greater understanding of the strengths and vulnerabilities of UNHCR culture as they impact upon the ways in which the organization manages and supports its staff, and ultimately upon the ways in which UNHCR culture helps or impedes its ability to protect and provide services to refugees.

Methodology

3.   This research was conducted utilising a qualitative approach in line with established methodology in the research of culture arising from anthropology and systems psycho-dynamic frameworks. In applying the study of culture to an organizational context, both disciplines aim to understand the "hidden and complex aspects of organizational life" (Kets de Vries 1991; Schein 1992:4). This level of analysis of organizational culture and dynamics requires direct experiencing and analysis of organizational data, such as behaviour, affect, patterns of interaction, written statements and communication, in order to discover more complex levels of meaning and understanding (Kets de Vries 1991; Schein 1992:7). To this end, participant observation, interviews, records of informal discussions, the keeping of a journal and review of organizational documentation formed the basis of the data collection methodology.

4.   From November 2003 until early January 2004 and for a short time in March 2004, I was based at headquarters in Geneva. I joined the Staff Development Section and participated in the daily life of the organization and of that section in particular. I sought to interview as many people throughout HQ as I could gain access to during

that time, and met with people at every level of the organization and from as many backgrounds, programme areas and roles as possible. I attended meetings, forums and staff gatherings.

5.   From late January until mid March 2004 and then between mid April and early May 2004, I visited the field in Africa, the Balkans and South East Asia. In total, I visited the operations of 12 countries outside headquarters. In each country I spent time at the branch office in the capital city and then visited at least one sub office, except where there were none, and whenever possible I also visited refugee camps or settlements. The length of time I spent in each location varied between a few hours to a week. I met with as many staff members as I could, either individually or in groups, from the drivers to the representatives. I also attempted to participate in or observe as many aspects of the day-to-day operations in the field as feasible at each location, which included attending meeting with donors and implementing partners, tagging along with field officers working in the camps or travelling to remote areas to access beneficiaries.

6.   Following is the list of questions that I generally used in each interview, both in HQ and field settings. While these were not rigidly adhered to every time, they formed a loose framework and were raised in the majority. I particularly attempted to ensure each time that both strengths and weaknesses were asked about, so as not to lead people solely into a discussion of the negative.

7.   Demographics:

- Current role, length of service, brief work history and what led you to work for UNHCR.

The Organization:

- What do you see as the greatest strengths of UNHCR?

- What are its most significant weaknesses in your view?

- Where are the main conflicts or tensions in the organization?

- How well is the organization in tune with the needs of its staff, in both field and HQ settings?

- What are the greatest support needs of staff in the field?

- How would you describe leadership and management in UNHCR?

- How does the organization manage difference? For example, gender, culture

- In general, how would you characterize the relationship between UNHCR and the refugees it works with?

- If you were High Commissioner for a week and you could be sure of success, what one or two things would you change as the highest priority?

8.   My intention is to be vague about exactly which offices I visited, as the purpose was to saturate myself in the overall culture of the organization to an extent that I might be able to discover general findings that apply to the organization as a whole. While I learnt a great deal about the specific challenges and situations in different areas, I was clear with project participants that my report would not identify their particular regions or analyse locally specific problems, as tempting as that might be. My concern was that the report not be seen as a critique of specific operations and teams, but rather I was in a unique position to experience some of what happens in the organization as a whole.

9.   I also took the opportunity whenever possible to meet, on my own or just with an interpreter, with refugees, implementing partners, peer agencies and donors, to discuss their perspectives regarding UNHCR. It should be stressed, however, that my main focus has been on the views and experience of those within the organization, and the data related to external stakeholders is limited and discussion of these external perspectives is brief by comparison.

10.   Since submitting the first draft of the report in mid 2004, a detailed process of feedback and further data gathering has been undertaken. Initial comments were incorporated to shape a second draft, which was then distributed amongst the Senior Management Committee and a number of other staff members who have key areas of expertise, for further discussion. This has constituted an ongoing process between September and December 2004 of dialogue and data verification.

Data collection and analysis

11.   I took detailed notes in every formal meeting held and maintained a regular journal. I collected organizational documents and accessed the internal email system throughout my contract. I also had access to a number of internal reports that analysed worksheets for the Senior and Middle Management Learning Programmes. Findings in those reports that are relevant to organization culture have been incorporated into this report.

12.   Over the initial four months of data collection, I acquired more data than I could manage to analyse within the time frame for the production of this report. In addition, to utilise all the data would have ensured that the report was far longer than it is already. For this reason, I selected a representative sample of interview data and utilised notes from my journal, which described much of the content of interviews. Therefore while I have not been able thus far to utilise the notes from every interview conducted, I can confidently say that everyone who generously participated in this project made a contribution in terms of teaching me about the organization and in shaping my thinking and theorising along the way.

13.   Data was analysed borrowing from a grounded theory approach, where emergent themes and patterns were explored. Grounded theory is a research methodology coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to describe an inductive, theory discovery method of analysis in which the researcher develops a theoretical account from empirical observations and data. In the field of organizational research, grounded theory is found to be suited to analysis of qualitative data gathered from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, case study data and from documentary sources (Martin 1986). The researcher begins without a clear

hypothesis, rather a general line of inquiry, in this case being the experience of UNHCR staff of their organization. Certain themes and categories emerge out of the data which appear to be influential and begin to present explanation.

Limitations of the methodology

14.   Perhaps the biggest limitation of the methodology is that I was a lone researcher attempting to learn what I could about a very large and diverse organization. I had the luxury of a reasonable period of time, and the great fortune to have been supported by the organization in accessing a fairly impressive number of offices. Being a lone researcher and consultant was an advantage in that it enabled me to make one to one connections with people along the way and to present myself in a less threatening manner than a team of researchers might have been able to do. However, as a lone researcher, the research and its findings will necessarily be limited by my own limitations. As stated above, I have particular knowledge, skills, experience and biases, and there are many things, and in particular technical or policy complexities, that I just didn't understand, or that I judged weren't of core relevance to the research. And I know that I missed some opportunities and took sketchier notes when I was too exhausted to think as a result of moving on a daily basis at times. I mention this less as a form of confession, but as a rider, that there are no doubt many aspects of UNHCR that are of great relevance and concern to people that I have not picked up on, understood or seen, or perhaps not given enough weighting to.

15.   The use of "one off" interviews brings some limitations that I hope are to some degree tempered by the other forms of methodology used, and by the fact that I also drew data from ongoing relationships with a number of staff members, particularly where I was able to spend more time. One off interviews will tend to elicit a strong sense of the negative, as people are drawn first to unburden themselves of the things that annoy, frustrate, hurt or disturb. I am mindful of this, but also feel that I was able to gain a strong sense of what people like and even love about the organization, and as stated, the ability to observe and participate in activities other than just interviews goes some way to balancing this factor.

The report

16.   I must locate myself squarely within this report. As mentioned above, it is in part the story of my experience of the organization on and off over a period of a year and given the qualitative nature of the research and the subjectivity of much of the data and the resulting theories, it would be an illusion to place myself on the outside as an impartial observer who claims some sense of pure objectivity. Of course much, or even most, of what is written is based upon the input of more than a hundred UNHCR staff members, but all the data is filtered through me and I have made choices about what to use, what to emphasise and what to leave out, as there is too much information to include it all. The process of filtering is influenced by my qualifications and experience as an organization consultant, a mental health practitioner and student of international development, and it is also influenced by my experience as a white woman, an Anglophone, a mother, a citizen of a small but developed nation, a family member and a passionate traveller, for example.

17.   The report begins with a brief overview of some theory related to organization culture, as a means to set a theoretical framework for what comes after. Additional theory is introduced along the way in the service of explaining concepts and interpretations that are made related to specific aspects of UNHCR culture. I have attempted to keep this to a minimum so as not to render the report even longer than it is, or too dense, however, some is required to make sense of what follows. Most sections begin with a one sentence summary "hypothesis" or theory. These attempt to draw out the key point of that section, and their meaning becomes clear through the discussion that follows. They are not assumptions that I entered into the research with, rather they are theories raised by the findings of the research.

18.   It should be noted that the while the report covers many facets of the organization, it cannot purport to deal comprehensively with all factors contributing to or reflecting the culture of UNHCR. Rather, it discusses a "cross-sectional slice" of issues that emerged most often and most strongly in the data. On reflection, at the end of the analysis and writing, and through the process of feedback, a number of issues emerged as notably absent, some of which are worth mentioning. I had originally intended to write a section on the Staff Council, however in the end I felt that I had insufficient conrete data to do adequate justice to a discussion of the role of this body. This is not to suggest that the Staff Council was not ever raised, and my more general comments on the general staff body do, on some level, include its representation by the Staff Council. Its omission merely reflects that fact that, utilising the methodolgy that I did, this subject did not emerge in a way that facilitated my writing about it, which is probably data in itself, but that which I feel insufficiently informed about to comment upon. Similarly, bodies such as the APPB, the APPC and the JAC were mentioned often, but the data did not vie for attention in the way that many other subjects did. This may reflect my own naivete as an outsider at the time of data gathering as much as anything else.

19.   The study of organization culture is in many ways a subjective science and there are a number of means by which it might be studied. As mentioned in the next section, I have chosen to focus primarily on the intersection of organization culture and systems psychodynamics theories, paying particular attention to the dimension of unconscious assumptions, attitudes and beliefs, and the ways of behaving and thinking that arise out of that. This is in part because it is where my particular expertise and interests lie, but also because I feel that this is perhaps where my insights and findings can be of most use to the organization. It would be of less use to write a report that merely told everyone what they already know, although I know that much of what is written here is well known and understood. Rather, my intention has also been to attempt to reach down into what is beyond awareness of those located within the culture, to make known what is unknown, so that knowledge may be used for reflection and to allow more options for decision-making. While I do make recommendations and suggestions at the end, the purpose of this report is not to spark off yet another grand change process, but to offer a means by which further thinking can be done, to suggest some stepping stones towards amelioration of some of the more problematic aspects of the organization's functioning and to provide an additional tool for work already being done.

20.   While there are many struggles and complexities across UNHCR that contribute to the stress levels of the staff and impact on the nature of the work and its outcomes, it has to be said that it is an organization with enormous strengths,

charisma and which serves a critical and immensely valuable service to the world. My intention in telling stories of this organization, that necessitate discussing some aspects of its "darker side", is as an offering for reflection and insight, as a means to stimulate thought and dialogue that may assist a strong and worthy organization become even better. It is not my intention to "pathologise the behaviour and functioning of the institution and its individual members without giving true regard to the effectiveness with which the conscious real-world tasks of the organization are being pursued" (Mosse, 1994:7). UNHCR is both immensely strong, intelligent and successful, and beset by conflict, weakness, drama, pain and dysfunction. I hope that I have done justice to its strengths, while acknowledging that I spend more time on the aspects of the organization that cause distress and undermine its performance.

21.   As so many people contributed to this report, I have been keen to allow many of their voices to be heard throughout it. It was extremely difficult choosing which quotes to put in and which to leave out, as the issues are complex and people had so much of value to say. When I use quotes I put them in inverted commas and indent them. The quotes are either direct, transcribed from my handwritten notes, or are from my journal, reporting what someone said to me. In that case, what is said is in the third person.

My experience of the project

22.   I want to give thanks to my project team, both the current and departed members, for their support and commitment to this project. And to all of the staff of UNHCR who participated in so many ways. I found that universally, people were enthusiastic, interested, generous and open in their contributions. I was humbled by how well I was looked after in the field. I was met virtually everywhere I arrived and came to regard with great fondness the legions of kind and accommodating drivers. My many travel and accommodation arrangements and details were looked after with care and kindness, making my task, and my life, so much easier. I was taken out on many occasions and made to feel welcome wherever I went. My project team and I were initially concerned that my visits to the field might inconvenience and demand too much time from busy schedules, and while I know for a fact that my presence was an added burden in many places, I was never made to feel that this project was viewed with anything less than great importance. In fact my visits to field teams were often perceived as a representation of HQ showing interest and concern in their experience and well being, and I was at times surprised and honoured by the thanks that I received for coming and hearing their stories.

23.   Thus the writing of the report has been a labour of both affection and anxiety. My experience of such generosity and openness gives data as to a strength of the organizational culture, and contributed very much to my own sense of attachment and regard for the organization. My anxiety rests partly around the enormity of the task that I got myself into, a sense of being overwhelmed, perhaps paralleling in some ways the enormity of the task of the organization as a whole. And it also resides around my desire to "do the right thing"; to honour the knowledge and experience that has been so generously entrusted to me.

Organization culture

Some brief background theory to "set the scene":

24.   The concept of organization culture in popular management texts often refers to the stated values of an organization, implying that culture is something that exists at a conscious level and can be deliberately transformed by managers. Both systems-psychodynamics and anthropological frames propose less superficial models that aim to understand the hidden and more complex elements of organizational life at a deeper level (Schein, 1992). Culture in organizations is associated with language and power, with systems of ideas and the ways they are expressed in interactions. It forms the frame of reference by which individuals and groups create meaning regarding their daily work and make sense of the challenges and changes they are required to manage (Wright, 1994). In essence, organization culture guides and influences at every level 'how we see things here' and 'how we do things around here'. This includes how people view and respond to each other, how they respond to their external environment and how they interpret and respond to the stressors they face.

25.   Assumptions, attitudes and beliefs that are generally outside awareness become embedded in people's thinking and feeling and influence understanding of the work task and how to perform it. These assumptions will have at the least an element of truth in them, but when they become a universal truth in themselves that disallows for other possibilities, they become restrictive and often counterproductive. Cultural assumptions, understandings and beliefs are expressed through "institutions" such as rules, patterns of communication and interaction, rituals, myths, codes and operating procedures. They guide perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours and are learned and passed on to new members of the group through social interactions (Schein 1992). These more observable aspects of culture include, for example, things everybody says. In UNHCR, particular words and expressions are passed around the organization and recur consistently, such as referring to the organization as "the house", particularly in Geneva, and many people used the expression "a disconnect" when referring to breaks in communication and co-ordination between different sections or between headquarters and the field. Both of these expressions struck me as quite idiosyncratic and reflect a convergence of ways of thinking and expressing oneself. The collective taking up of attitudes and beliefs within groups contribute to the atmosphere of the workplace and the emotional experience of being a part of it. 'People are often dissatisfied and frustrated in institutions, but very often the reasons remain obscure, and what is bemoaned may have little or nothing to do with the deeper reasons for their frustration'(Hinshelwood, 2000). The internal states of mind and the patterns of interactions of the individuals and groups participating within the system contribute to the development of organizational defence mechanisms, as discussed further later, which in turn influence and are influenced by culture.

26.   The culture of each organization is unique, despite some commonalities across organization types, because organizations incorporate the attitudes, beliefs and

behaviour of their personnel into their evolving culture. In this way it is shaped and reshaped by such factors as the interaction between leadership, the dynamics of various sub groups, and the most stable and least flexible elements of the organization. Founding leaders shape broad values and assumptions and once established, they become taken for granted and recede into the background of awareness. The emergent culture in turn begins to define practices within the organization, and for example, the types of acceptable leadership for later generations of staff. In the UNHCR context, the more stable and less flexible factors might include, for example, the existence of a large core group of long term and experienced staff, consistent ways in which many workers respond to the challenges of work in the field and a range of commonalities in beliefs, values and motivations that draw people to work in this field.

27.   In order to accommodate environmental changes effectively, an organization needs to adapt or add coping mechanisms by adjusting practices and assumptions. Organization culture provides an underlying framework from within which an organization may pursue the achievement of its primary or core task, but also, ironically, tends to develop in ways that work against that very goal. Despite its concern with survival, culture has the effect of restricting the options an organization has for responding to changes (Martin 1992). Over time the internal and external environments change and the organization inevitably faces adaptive difficulties as original assumptions no longer fit, or become invalid. The challenge for leaders is to step outside the prevailing culture in order to see it, attempt to understand it, and to assess in what ways it is impeding the functioning of the organization.

The primary task of the organization

Hypothesis: That in part as a response to the anxiety created by the enormity and complexity of the primary task of the organization, UNHCR tends to operate "as if" its primary task is to regenerate and organise itself.

28.   The concept of "the primary task" of the organization can be useful in providing a starting point for analysis of what the organization says it does and "what is also really going on". The primary task is that which the organization has to do in order to exist, in other words, the essential thing that it does and has to continue to do (Bain, 1994). There can be a number of competing primary tasks operating within an organization at the one time, that fall into two categories, the stated, or actual, primary task, and the "as if" primary task or tasks.

The stated primary task

29.   The stated "primary task" is the consciously stated reason for an organization's existence, generally expressed in its mission statement, which in the case of UNHCR, is "to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees" along with its mandate "to lead and coordinate international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems". While this mission is in many senses a pragmatic one that does not unrealistically undertake to "do it all", work with refugees, by its very nature, can evoke many complex emotions and reactions that are often difficult to recognise and deal with. Working with vulnerability, pain, trauma, homelessness, and dependency, for example, in addition to working in unsafe environments, may raise a range of emotional responses in workers, many of which might be, for example, embarrassing, uncomfortable, "politically incorrect", or distressing, and therefore not easy to acknowledge. Add to this the complexity of local and global political influences, the imperatives of funding, and the pressure experienced as a high profile organization in managing the expectations of the world at large, and fulfilment of the primary task becomes highly challenging.

30.   Interpretation of both the mission and the mandate is a source of concern in the organization. There is a potential conflict inherent in the tasks of the mission, whereby it is conceivable that there may be times when it is not possible to safeguard both rights, through the provision of protection, and well-being. This conflict is at times reflected in tensions or rivalry between protection and community services staff, for example. Dilemmas may also be presented by the mandate when the "resolution of refugee problems" may present conflict with their protection needs. In addition, where the line is drawn, who is in and who is out, whether the organization can assist and protect everyone, and what happens to the people who fall outside the boundaries are all sources of conflict and concern. People know realistically that there are not the resources to serve, or perhaps "save" everyone who needs it, however the lack of other alternatives and intimate knowledge of the consequences of exclusion raise ethical and moral problems that are difficult if not impossible to resolve to general satisfaction. So while the organization undertakes an ambitious,

but not necessarily impossible task, many factors combine to cloud the way forward, so that it may be experienced at times as overwhelming or impossible.

> "We have problems with our lack of clarity of vision"

> "There are arguments regarding IDPs. Should we expand the mandate or have we reached the limit?"

> "What is UNHCR supposed to do and what should it be delegating? This is a weakness. We have trouble delegating, we have a tendency to do all things ourselves."

The "as if" primary task

31.   As with any other organization, UNHCR also has a number of other secondary and auxiliary tasks that it must attend to in the service of the wider organizational goals. For example, it must organise itself, ensure ongoing and adequate funding, co-ordinate staffing, and respond to the accountability and reporting requirements of donors. As a reaction to complex situations as mentioned above, where difficult emotions are experienced, moral dilemmas proliferate and conflicts are often almost impossible to resolve, organizations tend to find ways to retreat from the difficulties these complexities evoke. A common effect is that secondary tasks grow to gain precedence over the actual primary task in terms of the amount of energy, resources and time devoted to them. In this case, it can be considered that the secondary or auxiliary tasks that have gained a prominence disproportionate to the actual primary task have become "as if" primary tasks, meaning that the organization, or separate groups within the organization, are behaving "as if" their primary task is something altogether different (Miller & Rice, 1967). In UNHCR the major "as if" primary task appears to be self-perpetuation. That is to say, UNHCR has a tendency to behave as though its primary purpose is, for example, to create reports, arrange staff movements and keep itself funded, rather than that these are all activities that occur only as a background and a support to the achievement of the actual primary purpose of protecting and assisting refugees. This is very commonly found in large organizations and highlights the potential for them to become preoccupied with self-perpetuation, with becoming and remaining "organised" rather than with what they produce as a way of retreating from the difficulties inherent in the real task. These "as if" primary tasks therefore have the effect at times of undermining the achievement of the core purpose by distracting focus from it, contributing to a considerable degree of internal stress, frustration and dissatisfaction. For example;

> "He reiterated his views about the organization becoming a self-feeding one, where its main purpose, particularly in Geneva, has become to keeps itself alive."

> "If this continues we will be just a paperwork institution, affected by the bureaucratic illness. It's safer"

> "You just report on the work of IPs. It becomes abstract and more abstract cutting and pasting from other reports."

> "There are too many reporting lines. We're locked in our offices trying to meet deadlines."

32.   It is by no means unique to UNHCR in the humanitarian sector that external influences and restraints influence the shaping of the "as if" primary task, including donor accountability requirements, relationships with host governments, the unpredictability of donor support and interest, media influence, competition with other agencies, and politics and power between governments and international organizations (Walkup 1997(2)). The need to maintain a high profile and operate within an increasingly competitive environment encourages a preoccupation with survival and self-justification across the sector, where organizations may lose sight of their higher ideals, focussing instead on activities that ensure their own continuation and growth (de Waal 1997).

> "Funding is still based on governments, not on private citizens, which is not so good. The degree of paperwork is because of the dimensions of the UN and governments. Donors permanently require reports; it becomes a reporting organization for these reasons. It's an ongoing story and it's paralysing."

33.   Discrepancy between the stated and "as if" primary tasks is reflected, for example, in the funding and staffing distribution in the organization and in some of the significant tensions between HQ and the field. It was striking travelling from HQ to the field and then out to the more remote field offices in non-emergency situations, to compare the large numbers of staff located at HQ and branch offices engaged in distant administrative and bureaucratic tasks with the relatively few situated at a field level engaged in work directly related to providing assistance to refugees. This is not to over simplify all the levels at which activity needs to occur in order to manage the size and complexity of the organization's task, however, the lopsidedness of role distribution in the face of desperation and the overwhelming nature of on-the-ground related responsibilities was nonetheless marked. Added to this is the fact that the majority of the staff who were undertaking the face-to-face work with refugees are national staff, UNVs and JPOs. These are the staff that the organization supports the least and spends the least money on, as is discussed further in other sections.

34.   One of the most significant tensions between the field and HQ, aside from resentment regarding the limited funding for field positions, is the degree of demand placed upon the field for compliance with paperwork and bureaucratic activities. Almost universally, field staff pointed out that the amount of time required to comply with HQ demands significantly interferes with their ability to meet the needs of refugees in their care, creating an image of an organization inadvertently sabotaging its own core purpose. It should be noted, however, that reporting requirements are something that is currently being tackled by the organization. Any attempts to rationalise and reduce the amount of reporting, whilst maintaining sufficient accountability, should be encouraged and supported fully.

Strengths related to organization culture

35.   The vast majority of people interviewed were asked what they thought were the greatest strengths of the organization. By far the two most common responses were the mandate and the commitment of staff. While many staff questioned the clarity of the organization's current vision and priorities, most people also thought the mandate provided a sense of purpose and was something to be proud of. Not everyone agreed, but many people also thought that the size of the organization allowed it the ability to mobilise resources and to respond in a concrete and generally effective fashion in an emergency. Another common response was satisfaction with being able to both directly help refugees and "make a difference", whilst influencing higher-level policy at the same time.

36.   Virtually to a person, interviewees spent more time talking about aspects of UNHCR they found problematic and dysfunctional, or would like to see improved. It is important to stress, however, that most people also said that despite the problems, they felt that the organization achieves positive outcomes, they feel proud to work for it and they wanted to continue to work with it.

> "UNHCR is still one of the best UN organizations. We're good, we function."

> "I'm proud of UNHCR and we do a lot of good things. We're trying to do the best we can."

> "On the whole I like this organization. It gets many things right".

37.   In a report such as this, where so many of the less functional aspects of the organization culture are laid out for examination and discussion, it can become difficult to hold in mind the "both… and" nature of the organization and instead become overwhelmed by its shortcomings. It was my consistent experience that the staff of UNHCR were impressive, intelligent, committed and talented. I argue throughout this report that the dynamics and culture of the organization are such that its potential is held back, however it cannot be over-emphasised that the talent within the organization also enables it to function and to achieve great things, despite its limitations. While there is much conflict between staff groups, as is discussed further in detail in other sections, there are also many positive and rewarding relationships between staff. Many people are highly regarded and respected, for good reason, and this factor is such a strength of the organization that it enables people to tolerate much of the more negative aspects of organizational life.

> "I have met some of the best staff in this organization. I am amazed by some of the people I get to meet. The good people are so good. Some don't perform, but I have enjoyed learning from the good people."

> "Our strength is the youngsters in the field, the JPOs, the UNVs, the P3s. This is UNHCR".

> "The flexibility of staff and their preparedness to take on new jobs and conditions"

38.   There was some concern that the ease with which people raised their concerns about the organization might indicate that UNHCR has a "complaining culture". Amassing so many of the "complaints" in one report could indeed somewhat inadvertently reinforce this notion. I offer an alternative perspective, however, based upon experience of a number of large, bureaucratic, public sector and humanitarian orientated organizations. I was struck by the openness and willingness with which people at every level shared their experience of the organization. This led me to believe that, despite the number and magnitude of the problems people raised, there was a high level of confidence among staff that the organization would accept their right to express themselves and that there might be some value in doing so. I did encounter some scepticism regarding the point of participating in the research, but this rarely prevented people from participating anyway, with openness and energy. It is universally my experience that people working in large public organizations find such environments fraught with conflict, complexity and stress. It is not always the case, however, that staff maintain such a deep sense of commitment to both the work and the organization, nor that they, despite much of what was said, demonstrate such confidence and a sense of entitlement to say what they think. Some of the factors I attribute this to include a firm conviction that the organization indeed should and could be doing better, a high level of capacity to think analytically, and a functional expression of the strong belief in democracy. In addition, I found a certain degree of congruence across all levels of the organization in understanding and experience of the limitations, so that, perhaps along with conflict and the frustrations with leadership, for example, there is also a sense of "we are all in this together". This is not to say that staff held a strong sense of optimism that things would improve in the near future, as there was in fact considerable pessimism in this regard. The degree of openness to this project itself, however, indicates a capacity and preparedness within the organization to think, reflect and evaluate itself that may paradoxically justify some optimism, despite the darkness of so much that was discussed and, ironically, despite the fact that lack of reflection and thinking was indeed one of the very things that many people complained about.

39.   Below is a sample of some of the other common strengths that people raised.

The scope of the work

> "The organization has the capacity to do high level policy for refugees and to work directly with refugees in emergency situations and camps. This is rare in humanitarian agencies."

> "What people are surest about is the mandate driven nature of the organization. People know what UNHCR does; a clear understanding with some disagreement on the periphery"

Emergency capability

> "I like the way the organization operates in emergencies. It's incredible, does its work incredibly well. At times we joke that it doesn't work properly when not in an emergency."

Being able to help

> "Being able to really help the refugees, to see the impact, the final outcome."

> "You're really helping. It's a good feeling that you've done something right. Our work with people is participatory and dynamic"

Training and learning

> "It's a more training oriented organization now, this is a strength"

> "We're becoming more knowledgeable (in dealing with some problems, for example the Code of Conduct to deal with harassment). We've come a long way forward in the last five years, but still have further to go."

Conditions and job satisfaction

> "You feel you are well paid for your efforts."

> "We have a nice working environment, multicultural, an interesting job"

Diversity

> "Rotation is also a strength because it brings in different experiences from different missions, at HQ it gives a sense of mission and purpose going"

> "A strength is that we come from all parts of the world and bring experience from other operations through rotation"

Commitment, love, addiction and sacrifice

Hypothesis: That the deep level of commitment to the cause and the mandate of the organization, while an underlying strength, also presents a vulnerability to exploitation in terms of personal sacrifice and reduces the incentives within the organization to resolve structural and organizational problems.

40.   Despite all the difficulties people face in getting their job done, deep commitment to the cause and the mandate enable them also to tolerate a considerable amount of dissatisfaction and discontent. It seems that many people feel deeply fulfilled and satisfied with their work at the same that day-to-day obstacles and inequities in the system present problems. The strengths of UNHCR staff with respect to their commitment to the goals and purpose of the organization also present a vulnerability to exploitation by the culture of the organization where their own health and well being is placed at risk in the face of, for example, an acceptance of overwhelming and uncontained workloads and high levels of disruption to their personal lives and social supports. This high level of tolerance may also be seen to reduce incentive within the organization to solve many of its structural and organizational problems, allowing a certain degree of complacency and dysfunction, thus lowering organizational performance to below its potential.

41.   This exploitation is not deliberate or calculated. The nature of the work, constraints in the external environment such as funding and resources, and a collective internal drive to do what needs to be done all contribute to the development of a culture where insufficient boundaries are placed around what people are reasonably expected (and expect of themselves) to do.

> "If you have a group of committed people you can continue to do the best and thank god we are a good team here. But sometimes you're lost and no one cares why we care so much."

> "We are really balancing on the edge. It's difficult to solve it because people are so far stretched and there's nothing to lean on and no time and resources to spend or invest in resolving some of these issues."

> "We have to cut back on what we do. You get stressed you will leave the beneficiaries without what they need".

42.   The love for the organization and its purpose, and preparedness of people to sacrifice other aspects of their lives, sets people up for significant disappointment when the organization is unable to reciprocate this love and commitment in recognition of their sacrifices. When people are posted away from their usual social supports they may tend to build a stronger dependence or expectation upon the organization to fill the gaps, a desire, even, for the organization to love them back; expectations that the organization is in general unable to fulfil. This is not to suggest that organization provides no support or care at all for staff. The staff development section and the staff welfare team are two examples of sections of the organization

that are seen as representing caring and nurturing, and are generally very highly regarded because of this.

43.   An overall feeling that the organization has failed them, however, may lead to bitterness when some people leave, as they feel that despite their sacrifices, they were "dumped" at the end. It is often suggested that the main solution to having too many permanent international staff is to put people on shorter term contracts and to encourage those who want to have a family to move on to other organizations that don't ask them to leave their families. This solution fails to acknowledge the deep level of commitment that people feel towards the organization, and indeed which they are encouraged and need to feel in order to allow it such a central place in their lives. For many people it would create deep distress to leave the organization and to be separated or even rejected from this "family" to whom they have devoted so much of their lives. Such a rejection or perceived callous disregard for such deeply embedded feelings can be experienced in a sense as becoming homeless. The quotes below illustrate some of the deep attachment and high expectations in particular.

> "A problem with rotation is the life cycle of people. They grow in life and change. The organization needs to spit out people on a continuous basis, but people don't want to leave"

> "You start to feel like you're only good for UNHCR. I worry that I'll only be able to function here. This place becomes your whole life, we've made sacrifices."

> "She said that she felt the need to look outside the organization for alternate employment in (her field), but that this was upsetting to her as she loves UNHCR despite its faults and she would prefer to stay."

> "There needs to be a balance there. There are people who have dedicated their lives and gone to hellholes for years, but it doesn't seem to count for anything. There isn't even a thank you. A simple thank you encourages people; we recognise only time, no other achievement".

The organization as "family"

44.   The level of attachment for the organization is expressed in the common use of the analogy of the organization as a family. Along with the sense of belonging, support and intimacy that this conjures, it also raised for many people darker analogies; such as tolerance of behaviour that perhaps shouldn't be tolerated in an organization, and the types of abuse that occur in families.

> "People in this organization do form a family. People do much more feel they're working together, more in the field than HQ. They're all thrown together, with all the problems of a family"

> "It's like we're in an abusive relationship, but we're staying in it for the kids."

> "He had a theory about the organization being like a big family and that it is tolerant of some of the more difficult staff because they are seen a bit like a mad aunt."

Love or addiction

45.   The word "love" has been used here, but there is some basis for debate as to what extent it is truly love and to what extent it is an addiction, or some form of dependence, or perhaps all of these things. The fulfilment many people derive from the work of the organization is deeply rooted in their own personal desires and needs to effect reparation in the world. This is a noble and worthy motivation, but it also feeds into internal needs that become complex and may interfere at times with clarity of analysis, leading to acting upon unconscious drives that are not always in the best interests of beneficiaries. Needs to feel good, to do something important, to be busy and engaged, to save people, to be stimulated, etc, all have both their positive and darker elements, that require reflection and containment. If the converse feelings of such drivers are to feel empty, useless, powerless, disappointed or bored, the consequences of striving to avoid these can be significant given the context of the work. Thus these elements form some of the greatest strengths and the greatest potential vulnerabilities of the organization.

> "I have no doubt love is a primary driver; keeps it together. Not much else does."

> "This is part of the dilemma that the organization faces, it seems to be constantly asking people to reduce their world to the sphere of the organization and then talks about how people just have to leave if it becomes too hard to balance their personal and professional lives. Many people feel that they have few other options after having worked for UNHCR for a long time, and they have given up their other support and social networks to varying degrees. Part of the difficulty in imagining not being with the organization is to do with the level of addiction that many people feel - 'How do you keep that buzz going? Where could I find a job that's this interesting and fulfilling?'"

Focus on the darker side

46.   The organization appears easily drawn into the dark side of emotion and experience and many people commented that it has difficulty celebrating, or being in the light. The constant exposure to, and absorption in, tragedy and despair, the ambitiousness of the task, the struggle to find the resources with which to carry out the work and the burden of external and internal experience combine to bring a sadness that is a times palpable. Alongside the commitment and passion for the work is a recurrent state of mourning and loss due to, for example, the choices that have to be made inevitably mean sacrificing or betraying some other need that can't be attended to, with very real consequences. In the face of this guilt and burden, inclinations to celebrate appear to be suppressed.

"As an organization we see too many horror stories and people focus on the drama. We don't take time to celebrate; instead we anticipate that things will go wrong. We need to be able to turn loss into something more positive. We internalise pessimism, moving from one place to another."

"In tragic moments the organization pulls together well for a short period of time to concentrate on the essential and enjoy solidarity. It is as if the organization needs our martyrs. But why can't we get the same satisfaction from, for example, closing an office because we've repatriated people successfully. We can't capitalize and share dividends beyond the immediate team."

47.   While many people indicated that tragic moments in the organization either contributed to or provided avenues for the expression of this sadness, others also felt that it has been contributed to by the difficulty of the internal dynamics and struggles of the organization, and not only by the nature of the work. Thus it would seem that some of the pervasive negativity and pessimism about the organization may be influenced by this aspect of the culture and the experience of many people within the organization.

"(Compared to) when I was last at HQ, you don't see much effervescence. It's more ordinary, people have lost interest in internal issues."

"Staff commitment has been battered by less leadership, inconsistency, increased workload with less resources, ageing of staff, reduced budget."

Perceptions of arrogance

48.   People both inside and outside the organization raised the perception of UNHCR as having a tendency for arrogance. While it wasn't something that was felt to consistently characterise the behaviour of all staff and all interactions, a number of staff worried that this is how they are perceived by others, and a number of people outside the organization confirmed this suspicion. People worried that this arrogance has undermined UNHCR's success in a competitive environment, and it certainly has the potential to damage, or at the least affect, relations with peers, implementing partners and donors.

49.   In the light of the discussion above, it seems conceivable that the arrogance may in part be a form of defence against the sadness, despair and guilt while at the same time reflecting the satisfaction and pleasure derived from the enormity and importance of the work

"There is a feeling that UNHCR is at the top of the pile in its field, a prime organization, and a lot of weaknesses derive from that; a sense of self sufficiency, a sense of insularity and a philistine attitude, an organization culture without much curiosity about the rest of the world and little connection to the rest of the UN agenda. This is a weakness in the organization in the sense that you can see how

UNHCR has fallen behind the curve. WFP is now seen more as a central organization in the humanitarian area. UNHCR was at the cutting edge even six years ago."

"We continue to suffer a lot due to our arrogance. We would have a better funding basis if we had secured the position that WFP has now."

"Our organizational pride is perceived as arrogance. Some is true, but there are also reasons to be proud. But the reasons some may have now are more historical, we're proud of our past. Our present, we should be less proud, we could be doing things much better."

Organizational defences: splitting, competition and envy

Hypothesis: That UNHCR has developed some organizational defences against the anxiety created by its primary task that create significant conflict and get in the way of growth, reflection, change and the fulfilment of task.

50.   In a similar way to individuals, the groups of people within organizations develop unconscious defence mechanisms against difficult emotions that are experienced as too threatening or painful to acknowledge. These emotions may be stimulated as a response to external threats or conditions, internal conflict and dynamics, or through the nature of the work itself and the experiences of the client group (Halton 1994). All of these factors are consistently and strongly at play across the aid industry and are added to by dissonance and conflict between "bigger picture" imperatives and the needs and goals of workers at the front lines, for example.

51.   People, groups and organizations tend to retreat to more basic, or primitive, emotional responses when under stress, threat or increased pressure, or during times of change. Under heightened pressure, even the most intelligent and professionally skilled can tend to see things in black and white, "us and them" terms where people and ideas can be experienced as all good or all bad (Halton 1994). When groups are operating in this mode, their capacity for problem solving and creative and productive thought are reduced and organizational effectiveness and outcomes are undermined. "Splitting" and "projection" are a pair of defences that have been observed to occur commonly within organizations operating under conditions of pressure or stress. These terms refer to the process whereby disliked parts of the self, team or larger group are unconsciously disassociated from the self, or split off, and attributed to others. These "others" are perceived as the ones who have the unwanted characteristics and become experienced as bad, threatening or incompetent.

52.   The structuring of organizations into separate groups, teams and divisions, while essential for the conduct of work, also provides an ideal environment in which splitting and projection can occur. The exaggerated divisions within the aid industry, created, for example, by geographical distance and distinctions between field level and head office personnel offer fertile ground for the projection and re-experiencing of distressing emotions such as competition, denigration, contempt, paranoia and the like. These processes can often lead to a dynamic of blame and a tendency for struggle between people or groups in an attempt to return unwanted feelings and projections.

53.   Splitting and projection, blame, competition, contempt, etc, are highly prevalent throughout UNHCR. Feelings of disenfranchisement, competition and blame occur at each level of the organization, between Headquarters and the field, between branch offices and sub offices, across programme areas, between staff with postings and SIBAs and between many of the significant and diametrical interest groups. For example between: protection and non protection staff; general service

and professional staff; national and international staff; staff on indefinite contracts and those on short or fixed term contracts, including between JPOs, UNVs and permanent staff; those who have families and those who don't; different cultural and racial groups; women and men; newer staff and longer term staff. This is not to say that all people in each group experience or express these negative feelings towards others, or even that all who do express them experience them all of the time. There were, however, so many and repeated examples of such competition and envy between these groups to give sufficient weight to this assertion. Some of the more prominent sites of these dynamics are discussed further in more detail below.

Power

54.   Simultaneously mixed within these unconscious defensive processes are dynamics of power. For example, the flip side of selfless commitment to the organization is a sense that people are also engaged in a perpetual struggle for power. This occurs on many levels and is illustrated in a number of different sections. One aspect of the struggle for power in the organization is about the power to have control over one's life while the organization asks people to hand trust and control of their lives over to the organization. Many people refuse to, or "hedge their bets", fuelling the competition and envy. As a result people evaluate each other as to who has handed over their power, or "submitted" and who hasn't. Resentment is directed towards those who appear to have gained some power through the process or who have survived without handing it over.

55.   On a larger dimension, the organization reflects the power structures of the wider global society in which it is located. As will be discussed in further detail below, relations between different cultural groups, and between men and women, and their relative power and influence in the organization in many ways mirror political dynamics between represented countries, and general gender dynamics in the world at large.

Relationships with refugees

> *Hypothesis: That the conflicting emotions aroused by the work leads to a complex relationship between UNHCR workers and refugees, which can cause workers, without adequate training and support, to defend themselves against the very people they are there to assist.*

56.   Personal emotions and societal norms are intensified by public emotions and responses during the type of high profile operations that UNHCR is engaged in. When the media and humanitarian organizations seeking money represent refugees as innocent, dependent and helpless children, they highlight a developed world that is more inclined to donate money to people they perceive as powerless and lacking in agency (Harrell-Bond 1998). A desperate and perpetual struggle for funding and discomfort aroused by ambivalent and even negative feelings towards refugees, both fuel the drive among humanitarian organizations to promote a benevolent and altruistic image for themselves and to foster innocent victim images for the recipients of their aid (Harrell-Bond 1998; Terry 2002; Vaux 2001; Walkup 1997(2)). This dilemma is reflected in UNHCR through such images as the ever-present posters of

appealing refugees on the walls of every office, and the symbol of the caring hands, both of which can be interpreted in a number of ways.

57.   Both UNHCR and the refugees they serve are subject to enormous pressure from the external world to act out stereotyped fantasies. The reality of flawed, angry, hostile and at times not so innocent refugees is in stark contrast with the doe-eyed images portrayed but is far less likely to bring in the money needed. The international community on some levels wish UNHCR to undertake an impossible task with inadequate money; to make it better, to keep the mess out of sight and under control and to confirm a fantasy of pure altruism rescuing "beautiful" but "weak" people. Everyone is in a bind, as at the ground level the complexities and imperfections are known, but the dilemma can tap into some workers' own vulnerability to take on and live out the fantasy.

58.   As much as their vulnerability and need may arouse conflicting emotions in those providing the care, it may also arouse anger, resentment and hostility in the refugees themselves at the situation they find themselves in. Particularly when the situation grinds on over time, refugees may become increasingly frustrated at their own impotence and lack of power, and the anger they experience is very often directed towards those they have access to: workers at the field level. In some situations, workers have to protect themselves, either physically or emotionally, against the very people they are there to protect, and ambivalence can be fostered in these relationships.

> "I've experienced a defensive relationship to clients. It was a relief when the Kosovars came and we didn't have to determine their status. Our skills in dealing with ambiguity are variable. Not a lot of attention is paid to these skills; how do I sit, talk, interact? A lot boils down to 'this person's got the right personality'. It's resource wasting when at the root you have a person who doesn't know how to deal with people."

> "With limited resources to manage, at times refugees feel that people at the forefront are making the difficulties."

59.   During Management Learning Programme workshops, groups were asked to discuss and record their perceptions of the predominant assumptions, beliefs and values within UNHCR regarding refugees. More than half of the groups that responded reported that the predominant assumptions were patronising. They felt that on the whole their colleagues regarded refugees as dependent upon UNHCR to solve their problems, assist and protect them, with an underlying assumption that this is due in some part to an inferior ability to help themselves. Just under a quarter of the groups felt that the predominant view was positive, and a roughly similar number of groups described a predominantly negative view.

> "People lose the idea that refugees are people and not a huge group en masse. They lose sight of the individuals, lose sight of the fact their whole lives were screwed up, that they were people of consequence and all their plans and dreams were destroyed. We don't talk about that so much. Sometimes we get overwhelmed by the numbers; it becomes like a factory because it needs to be efficient. It's hard to find a balance with the human side of things".

60.   The response to poverty and adversity at times includes contempt along with concern, as is evidenced in the MLP feedback. The desire to see people as vulnerable in order to assuage feelings of guilt and compassion and to derive a sense of one's own goodness at helping taints the altruism and turns to disgust at their vulnerability, lest we be reminded of our own. Ironically, a reaction against the potential for weakness in the self may be found more acutely in the humanitarian aid sector, where many workers also want to demonstrate prowess and bravery. Contempt and disgust are unacceptable feelings and tend to be split off and projected onto others or to remain unacknowledged. While these feelings are a common part of human existence, their emergence in this context allows them to perhaps be experienced more acutely and for their consequences to be significant.

> "It's difficult for UNHCR to admit that they don't like dealing with refugees. It's draining that you can't solve their problems and that they take a long time to tell their stories. We're not sufficiently in tune with them; we assume they're always the same. From an organizational perspective, there's not enough positive reinforcement of these skills. Any senior manager would cut Community Services first; we don't put much importance on it."

61.   There are, therefore, a number of motivating factors that lead many UNHCR workers, regardless at times of skill and experience, to step back from direct face-to-face work with refugees. Along with the underlying dynamics as described above, there was a high level of frustration and despair expressed regarding an acute and ongoing lack of resources.

> "There is so much interest for UNHCR staff to reach out to refugees on a daily basis. We were excited to talk to refugees, but now we try to avoid meeting them because if our answer to every question is sorry, I can't, don't want to add to the frustration. It's very difficult. We lie to ourselves very often, I find it very disturbing."

> "The needs of refugees are so great and the resources we have are so reduced that we probably develop a thick skin, lethargy creeps in. So much so that when you see abuses being committed, often HCR colleagues are the last to know."

62.   Another factor is the impact that working with people who have suffered trauma, and may be in a heightened emotional state, has on the people attempting to assist them. Workers who hear reports of trauma, horror, human cruelty and extreme loss can be overwhelmed and they may begin to experience feelings of fear, pain, and suffering similar to those of refugees (Sexton 1999). The ability to tolerate such high degrees of stressful material requires support and skill, and people consistently reported that access to such support or relevant training is extremely limited. As a result, many people find reasons to keep away from refugees. The pressures of workload and the reporting requirements are clearly easy to blame and it would be difficult to dispute their very real interference in contact with refugees, however it is more than that, it is both.

> "I wouldn't go to an emergency situation because I can't bear to see people die in front of us because of lack of resources. There is not much support for staff to deal with this. We used to be able to send

people to university, now it's a worry about food and we don't have the answers they need."

"Another taboo subject is our relationship with refugees. We're seen as distant. Someone referred to it as the submarine syndrome. We're in our fortresses managing operations, not making enough time to consult with beneficiaries. We are often seen as lacking in humility, with a lack of proper communication and we're not transparent with them."

63. Notwithstanding the many challenges, the research uncovered many examples of positive and productive relationships with refugees. For example, the comment below, made during a meeting with a group of frustrated and despairing refugees, indicates that they were both enthusiastic about their current representative and local workers, and angry and pessimistic that anything was going to improve. Their interactions with the representative and other staff before my meeting with them were warm and respectful, and the staff demonstrated a capacity to face their frustration constructively and without defensiveness. Along with many examples where the work and relationships are negatively influenced by complex dynamics, there is also enormous capacity for the work to be carried out in a manner where such dynamics are contained or dealt with effectively, either consciously or intuitively.

"There have been positive developments here since the new rep came; people have come to visit us. We're fully confident that UNHCR represents our needs well.. But so many people come and nothing comes out of it"

64. Throughout the research I saw and heard of situations or relationships that were collaborative, respectful, thoughtful and handled in a skilled manner. For example, the years of experience on the ground, and often with the same communities, of many national staff members lent their work an air of ease and authoritative containment that was clearly well responded to by the people relying upon them for assistance. National and international staff participating in the research, in both their words and their actions, frequently demonstrated experience, skill and capacity for reflection.

Competition and envy

Longevity and hardship postings

65. Credibility and worth is very often measured in the organization through both longevity and field experience, and particularly through the difficulty of prior postings. If one has undertaken sufficient hardship postings, or participated in a number of high profile emergencies, this seems to give one the credibility that provides some currency and an informal authority. While both of these traits are indisputably of value, they do not provide information as to the effectiveness or competence of the worker, and therefore it is curious to an outsider to find an expectation that such factors might play a significant part in decisions regarding promotion, for example. The value placed on these factors is indicative of the

potential for a competitive drive between workers to take hold and be embedded in culture, outweighing at times more rational or balanced processes.

66.   This dynamic contributes to the difficulty new staff, and especially new senior staff, often experience fitting into and succeeding within the organization. There is a perception that particularly new senior women don't last long in the organization. Experience gained elsewhere is often discounted or downplayed and the lack of hardship postings and longevity, along with the lack of in depth knowledge of the organization that these assume, undermine the establishment of credibility and authority, which is particularly essential at a senior level. Most people who talked about this were not happy with the dynamic and felt that the organization needs "new blood" and a variety of perspectives, but it seems that the influence of these factors is deeply ingrained and operates quite strongly at an unconscious level.

> "The organization is narrow-minded and conservative; we exclude newcomers. I don't blame the organization, we're all responsible"

> "Newcomers are given a hard time. They have to prove themselves doubly and its worse if you're a women and worse if a woman from a developing country."

> "She talked about her own internal struggles regarding competition over fieldwork. She said that she had a supervisor who hadn't been to the field, but who had good technical knowledge. She said she partly felt he shouldn't tell her what to do because he hadn't been to the field and he should respect the fact that she had worked in a war zone. But on the other hand, she also acknowledged that he had more knowledge and skill than her in their current roles and she respected him for that."

Altruism vs. careerism

67.   The motivations for working with UNHCR may be seen as somewhat more diverse than those found in an international NGO, for example, but can be roughly allocated into two larger sub groupings. One group are those who join for more or less altruistic or personal reasons, who want to help people and work towards equity, and the other group join perhaps for primarily career reasons, seeking a career in the UN, falling into the organization by chance, an opportunity for a better income or for family or traditional reasons. Of course there are many other motivating factors, such as a desire to travel or work in different countries, and most people will hold elements of both groups, while perhaps favouring one slightly more than others. This difference in reasons for joining creates its own cultural divide, where each group can be disparaging of the other, and in particular the "altruists" can tend to criticise the "careerists" for their seemingly less pure motives. At times the two groups can become synonymous, inaccurately, with those who are "dedicated, work hard and sacrifice the most" and those who "spend more time worrying about their career", another example of the tendency for splitting and competition, projecting factors such as lack of compassion and commitment into those perceived as only interested in their careers.

"We talked about the refugee trump card that is used to raise guilt and prevent people from asking for too much in their own lives. He said that so often in meetings someone will eventually comment that no one has mentioned the refugees. This struck me as potentially a competitive gesture and a means for saying I am more pious than you, you should remember to feel guilty."

68.   Similar threads exist in relation to people who want to achieve balance in both career and family. In part, harsh and unsympathetic attitudes towards those who want to remain in the organization, but still meet the needs of their families, are a function of this projection of "selfishness" and lack of pure dedication and sacrifice into particular groups. There appears a belief that all people coming through should suffer as the older guard did, so that desire for a family life and some choice in destiny are characterized as selfish and evidence of a lack of commitment to the refugees, as though the refugees will benefit from high levels of self sacrifice and pain on the part of the people providing them with assistance. In this way, others are attempting to not experience their own selfish feelings, their frustration and even anger towards the refugees. In addition, some are also avoiding knowledge of the pain their own life choices may have caused for themselves. One is able to remain confident of one's true commitment and correct choices when in the company of others who are clearly of questionable motivations. This attitude is so prevalent within the organization that as a whole it seems prepared to see large numbers of staff either suffer or leave rather than accommodating their needs, thus rendering the organization potentially more and more homogenous and lacking in diversity of life experience.

Fear of being attacked by colleagues

69.   There is a strong anxiety among staff about being attacked and judged by their colleagues. Given the many reasons for which staff might experience such an attack, whether it be, for example, an accusation of trying to stay too long in Geneva, of creating special circumstances or using networks to avoid a hardship posting, of using gender as a means for promotion, of favouring friends or fellow country people, or any number of other perceived transgressions, it seems that such fears are reasonably well founded.

70.   Such attacks and judgements are justified often under the banner of fairness, and in the pursuit of such fairness, there is an extremely high demand by staff for detailed information regarding other people's circumstances. Without such detail, colleagues are quick to assume negative motivations within each other and "conspiracy theories" are common. This fact led a number of staff to discuss their distress at the level of intrusion into their personal business, and several people mentioned making, or feeling compelled to make, decisions that were to their own detriment in order to avoid the criticism. For example, one person said that they had turned down a promotion because they felt sure that people would judge them harshly for being promoted "too quickly" over the heads of others who were waiting. They said that in the long run it could be detrimental to their career if rumours spread with theories as to how they had gained the promotion. A number of other people talked of their anxiety when being called back to Geneva for a posting, especially if they had already spent some time there in the recent past. They all expressed similar concerns that they would be judged by their colleagues as

having done something underhanded to get back there, even if in reality they would prefer to stay in the field. Other people talked of how painful it was to have to expose one's personal issues in public processes when applying for exceptions to postings. There is a high degree of resentment at the perceived assumption that most people are just trying to avoid being uncomfortable or "sharing the burden".

> "He related a story about when there had been a freeze on promotions for three years. He laughed and said it was probably one of the happiest times in the organization. No one complained because everyone was in the same boat. But when the freeze was taken off, there were problems regarding who was put in the first round of promotions and who had to wait a year. He said that he was passed over and a colleague wasn't, and he felt bitter because he thought he was better than that person."

> "We have opened a Pandora's Box on the issue of malicious complaints. There is a lot of backstabbing. You can use the complaints procedures to try and ruin a colleague's reputation."

> "If you do something good, lots of people will know, if you do something bad… more people will know."

Trust

71.   Lack of trust within the organization is a fairly expected outcome of the factors outlined in the discussion above, along with other factors discussed in more detail elsewhere. Comments specifically about trust tended mainly to be directed towards the more senior levels of the organization, however the problem of trust seems to be wider. As evidenced by the examples above, in many cases, staff simply have difficulty in trusting each other due to the lack of containment of distressing and darker emotions and motivations within the organization.

> "She also said that as a reaction to the current climate, people have become more secretive and withholding of information. She said there is a culture of not being able to admit when one doesn't know something, which prevents learning."

> "Trust was another big issue that came up as people asked about confidentiality and how the process will be accountable. Everyone seemed to agree that accountability and trust are big problems in the organization."

> "Everyone here has a story about being screwed. There's a lack of trust two ways, between the organization and the staff"

> "She said that some of the stories of harassment were highly disturbing, but in general people said that they never complained because they didn't trust the organization to protect them adequately. She said there was one woman who complained and she was made a SIBA and spent the next five years floating without a permanent post."

72.   The issue of lack of confidentiality was brought up a number of times. When explored further, it seemed that while there are many stories that circulate about how complaints or confidential conversations were leaked, often the narrators of the story didn't actually know the people involved. It seems however, that these stories, verified or not, have a significant influence on people's behaviour when making a decision about how to handle problems.

> "If you want to make a complaints procedure, you'll find at the end
> of the day that it wasn't confidential".

73.   These phenomena have a number of underlying qualities. They demonstrate, for example, the competition and envy that is aroused whenever any individual is perceived to gain an advantage over others, or to have something that other people don't have. Despite the prevalence of these dynamics, much activity in the organization is designed to avoid experiencing them, clearly unsuccessfully. The pursuit of "fairness", which is discussed in more detail below, is one such attempt to quell the differences that might allow one person to be recognised as more talented or favoured than another. As is often the case, attempts to avoid or suppress one dark aspect of organizational experience have significant ramifications and spin off effects in other aspects of experience, creating a circular effect.

Fairness

> *Hypothesis: That there is an unquestioned underlying assumption in UNHCR that "fairness" should take precedence over most other issues in decision and policy making, but as an organizational defence and an unachievable aim, this leads to the suppression of difference and to the treating of people equally unfairly.*

74.   Most people talk in terms of what is fair and not fair in the organization. "Fairness" is one of the most prominent underlying assumptions in the organization, and the need for things to appear fair and be applied equally to all takes precedence over many other issues. Fairness is an assumed value, although what it means in practice and how it might be achieved is not clearly defined and it is often a way of saying that everyone should be treated in exactly the same manner. It can in fact be argued that treating everybody in the same manner negates and disallows or even suppresses difference, and ignores the fact that people come with different experience, needs, circumstances, life stages, abilities, etc. When applying an "exactly the same" philosophy within an organization, a benchmark for what is reasonable treatment has to be established, even if unconsciously. This benchmark allows people to know "intuitively", without conscious thought, what is "ok" and what is not "ok". Research into sexuality and gender in organizations proposes that organizations tend to be founded upon the values, needs, expectations and sexuality of men, and often white/northern/heterosexual men, and these values recede into the background of awareness, so that they become assumed as neutral and unconscious. This can place women, people from cultural minorities and homosexuals, for example, at a disadvantage when their needs or experience are at odds with those that have been declared neutral and fair, and the pressure is to conform. Ultimately this disadvantages many men in the dominant group as well.

75.   The strength of the assumption of fairness is part both an outcome and a driver of the prominence of all levels of staff in influencing decisions, whereby the dynamics between people in the organization related to competition and envy overshadow the ability of leaders to make decisions that would benefit the organization as a whole from a more global viewpoint. This is not to say that staff should not be involved in decision making, nor that there should not be any form of democracy, however it seems unbalanced, often uncontained, and pervasively influenced by these organizational defences to the extent that fairness, true and productive involvement by staff and democracy are not often actually achieved. The idea of fairness is also in part a product of the predominance within the aid industry of staff who have strong value systems regarding fairness and equity in the world and will fiercely expect this to be applied within their organizations as well. This is a phenomenon not unique to UNHCR.

76.   With so many differing needs, abilities, circumstances and life stages within the organization, the main outcome of this expectation of universal fairness is that everyone is, by default, treated equally unfairly. This seems to ensure that everyone is unhappy with outcomes, in an unconscious and futile hope that competition and envy will be suppressed. Because of this persistent unfairness, however, people strive to find ways to have their particular needs and talents catered for, forcing the high level of exceptions that are disparagingly commented upon throughout the organization. There appears to be little compassion for others' needs and the prevailing competition and envy influences discourse and attitudes. In an organization where good performance cannot be sufficiently rewarded, people crave some recognition and indication of being special or somehow different. When others are perceived to have received special treatment, the envy becomes too difficult to bear and the negative criticism discussed above is a common expression of this.

Application of the fairness principle

77.   One of the most popular topics in the organization is rotation. There seems to be a number of underlying assumptions that govern people's interpretations of the rules, and that are somewhat conflicting. First of all, people seem to assume that the system should be "fair" and this assumption includes that "fairness" means that everyone should be advantaged or disadvantaged to the same extent. That no one, including senior managers, should be exempt from the disruption to family life and routine. There seems another underlying dynamic here that people won't be able to bear their own disruption unless everyone else has to bear it as well. We can only all be happy if we're all equally miserable. Whenever someone manages to bypass the standards, others fantasize about what corrupt and unfair process has gone on behind the scenes to allow it to happen. This represents dichotomous thinking where things are either wholly fair, or they're nepotistic and corrupt. It's also an indicator of a site of power struggle – between senior management and the rest of the staff – as to who has the power to control whose life, how people construct meaning around this lack of control and the impact it has on them, and whether the same and equal disruption should be experienced by senior staff as well.

78.   Some of the alternative beliefs or values that conflict with the fairness, "everyone is the same" principle include that people should be rewarded more for good performance, the right people should be selected for the right job, and the organization needs to solve the problem of a lack of women above the P4 level.

Despite being flawed and quite impossible to enact, the underlying assumption of fairness takes precedence over almost all other values. While some effort is made to accommodate these other values, it is virtually an impossible task, as each of the other notions requires the ability to think of people as individuals with their own unique needs and contributions, as well as a part of the larger staff body. It requires being able to hold both notions in mind simultaneously. As the rotation policy, as discussed above, is founded within a dominant paradigm of, for want of a better description, white northern male perspectives, it provides the potential means for discrimination against those whose life circumstances do not fit with this paradigm. The mantra of fairness serves to rapidly repress discussion regarding the particular needs of women, parents and any other groups.

> "When one woman asked a question about what they're doing about family friendly policies, the answer was quite bland and rooted in the assumptions about the need for fairness being primary, ahead of any other considerations."

> "A man asked about the rules that allowed new single mothers to apply for extra maternity leave. He said it wasn't fair and asked why men couldn't have the same allowance. This launched a lengthy discussion as to how common it was that a man would find himself as a single father with a relatively newborn baby. He was indulged by the panel and everyone present, and was eventually told that in such a situation, the man could apply for special consideration. I was struck by the amount of time spent on such a spurious issue and I wondered if the underlying competition is so strong and so accepted that it either wouldn't occur to anyone to say "how ridiculous" or it isn't safe to stand in the way of an envious attack. I left feeling that women really can't win a trick around here."

Networking

> *Hypothesis: That rather than predominantly a sign of "nepotism" rampant in the organization, the use of personal networks is also a very understandable and highly predictable side effect of an unrealistic system that asks too much of people.*

79.   There is a strong perception throughout the organization that personal networks are very often used to influence career progression and most particularly, recruitment and postings. The fact that some people have better networks than others arouses an enormous amount of resentment and envy. Most people agree that a posting in Geneva is one of the most efficient ways to build networks, and therefore people who have spent most of their careers in field postings, and especially in more remote postings, feel less in control of their careers. There is an often-repeated belief that people in remote postings without networks get posted from one D or E duty station to the next. For example:

> "It's self perpetuating, people in remote posts, no-one knows them, there's no-one to support their applications to move to better places"

"He talked about the networking and how people who are closest to the centre manage to further their careers more effectively through being closer to the power bases. He said that it is particularly difficult for the lower grades in the field to do the amount of networking required to secure better postings and without that profile they will stay in the harder duty stations in the longer term."

80.   Without hard data regarding this, it is difficult to evaluate whether this is in fact true of as many cases as is presumed, however, the belief is strongly held. There was some optimism expressed during the course of the study that the situation may change as a result of the new APPB guidelines, however most people tended to think that not much would ultimately change.

81.   There are many underlying "scripts" in the organization that describe how people feel things are or should be in the organization, either consciously or unconsciously, but many of which are unachievable. Some of the more overt drivers behind the design of many policies and structures include:

- "Everything should be seen to be fair, and that means to treat everyone exactly the same"

- "People can't have a family and work for this organization, people should agree to sacrifice their personal life when they join"

- "Given the choice, everybody would want to go to Geneva and stay there"

- "Everybody wants to avoid D and E duty stations, so we can only fill them if we force people to go"

- "If people don't like it, they can work somewhere else"

Some variations of a more deeply situated and less articulated driver include:

- "Commitment is demonstrated here by self sacrifice, in fact, the more one sacrifices, the better they are."

- "The best people here are those who don't worry about their career and throw themselves into the cause"

- "We can't be helping refugees if we worry about our own concerns and needs. The fulfilment of helping people should be enough; it would be somehow greedy and unacceptable to want it all"

82.   There is a form of widespread "peer group pressure" across the organization to maintain this altruistic and self sacrificing position, as is discussed above, as a means to disown unwanted feelings that are on some levels characterised only in negative terms such as "greed" or "selfishness". For most people, however, this is an impossible position to maintain, and the need to manage the competing demands in one's life becomes forced underground. Because in part of the difficulty in discussing this openly, such behaviours are then invested with predominantly negative motivations, further evidence of the existence of the "selfish careerists" who will do what they can to stay in Geneva or to avoid D and E duty stations, for example. It

could be argued, however, that rather than only a sign of blatant corruption within the organization, the use of personal networks is a very understandable and highly predictable side effect of an unrealistic system that simply asks too much of people. The two main sides to this equation are the people seeking a new post, and managers seeking to recruit to their teams. This point will be discussed further from each of these perspectives.

83.   Most people agree that the burden of being posted to difficult duty stations should be shared within the organization, but with very little structured control as to how or when people might elect to "do their time", it is highly predictable that staff will seek whatever ways they can to exert some control over their careers and their lives. In contrast to the institutionalised ideal of people graciously accepting their lot in the service of the greater good, the reality is an underground "every person for themselves" marketplace, which can be experienced as savage, anxiety provoking and advantaging some over others. The desperation of the "horse trading" over postings is not only to do with exercising some choice and an attempt to meet both personal and professional needs and obligations, but it is also more recently added to by the very real likelihood of becoming a SIBA, as this short case example demonstrates;

> "She was unsuccessful in securing another post, however her own post was filled and she received a letter stating that she was to become a SIBA. She said that this is a terrible thing and she doesn't want to be affected by the stigma of it, so she has decided to take six months leave without pay so that she can do other things and then reapply at the next compendium without being on record as a SIBA. I was surprised and felt the need to keep checking with her that she had decided to live without her salary to avoid the stigma. She agreed and said that she knows a number of other staff who are doing the same thing. She said that if she doesn't get something in the next round, she will have to change her strategy and learn to lobby more for her career. She believes that she has trusted too much in the system in the past and just applied for jobs and hoped that the process would be fair. Despite the fact that she worked in Geneva for a number of years, she said that she didn't network assertively and she has not developed the contacts she needs to further her career. She said mostly she has been content to be where she was and just to "sit back and do her work", but at times she worries that people will judge her for still being (at the level she is) and not having moved on very far in her years with the organization."

84.   This case gives a good example of the interconnected nature of issues and dynamics that may influence and shape behaviour in the organization. This staff member has chosen in the past not to engage in the competitive environment in order to set up networks for her career. She held out a hope that her good work would speak for itself and believed in the ability of the system to look after her career. She now finds herself in a position where regardless of her good work and success as a leader, she faces being stigmatised as not good enough. For, as is discussed elsewhere, SIBA status has come to represent another split in the organization, a place where much of what is regarded as bad or dysfunctional in the organization can be located. In order to avoid that she is prepared to be without

income until the next compendium cycle, as she seems to feel that in the long run, SIBA status risks damaging her career further. Lack of sufficient career progression is another factor that is creating anxiety for her at the same time. Again, in not keeping up with the competition to gain promotions, she has realised that this also may affect her career in the future. This example reinforces a commonly expressed belief in the organization that the real skills required to further one's career are in fact networking skills. Whether or not networking is "right" or "wrong", it seems that the organization is not able to assure its staff that the system will work for them, and therefore most people are forced to join the alternate underground system, and face the consequences of criticism and accusations of being self serving.

85. On the other side of the situation are the managers who are anxious to recruit the best people they can to their teams. Given ambivalent attitudes towards authority in the organization, there is often a stated reluctance to allow managers much, if any control over recruitment to their teams, and this seems to have been an ongoing struggle for some time. Some people felt that when managers have had more control, they abused this freedom of choice by recruiting only people they knew or who were of their own sub groups. Again, this disadvantages people who have a low profile and who are just a name on a piece of paper to most. Managers, on the other hand, were in some instances quite unapologetic about their reliance upon their own networks to research the qualities of prospective candidates. One senior manager said openly that while he doesn't necessarily believe that networking is the right thing to do, until the PAR system is more reliable, and while his children are young and need him around, he will continue to use his networks to both recruit the people he feels will be most likely to fit in and work well, and to secure his own future postings in places where he can remain near to his family. Following is another example.

> "One senior woman talked of the nepotism in the organization and agreed that she used her contacts to the extent that she could in order to not be far from her family. She also said however that it's not as prevalent in the organization as people think, rather it's often assumed."

> "After 20 plus years I should be authorised to select my own team. There's a contradiction – they leave me to be independent, to be alone in front of the challenges, but I can't pick my own team. They believe very much in decentralisation but they need to support you and allow you to select your own priorities."

> "They both agreed that there is a mixed culture around recruitment but that it is as possible to experience a professional process as a nepotistic one. We wondered whether people just remember the stories of nepotism more."

86. While no one wants to be disadvantaged by being unable to successfully apply to posts where they are not known, most people would also agree that the morale and effectiveness of a team can be adversely affected by the presence of someone who is ill suited to their role or unable to work well in a team. Managers in UNHCR generally seem to do what managers do in every organization, that is, they try to increase their chances of employing either the best people or the "safest" people. When people are rarely interviewed, there is not a diverse range of formal referees to

access and the PAR reports provided are not trusted, managers are far more likely to choose either people who are known to them or to people whose opinion they trust rather than recruit people blind.

87.   This is not to argue that in no circumstances do these practices go beyond reasonable or understandable limits to constitute "nepotism". (It should be clarified here, that the term "nepotism" is used in this report in a reflection of the fashion in which it is often used in the organization, that is, meaning not only "employing members of your family or tribe", but also colloquially to mean the employing or promoting of close friends and network members). What is being proposed essentially is that all instances of network utilisation have the potential to be lumped into the same category and viewed with suspicion, instead of being seen by and large as a normal side effect of the system and expectations that are currently in place. But once such an underground system is in place, it is certainly likely that many variations of practice and attitudes will evolve from it, and with either a limited ability or will to contain and monitor it, it becomes a means to express a range of unconscious dynamics such as splitting, exclusion and mirroring of wider international politics, for example.

> "People who are in the "in" crowd tend to get things the way they want them and aren't as subject to the rules of the organization."

> "The more effective the spy network, the better"

> "She mentioned that she has noticed that there are a number of favoured senior staff who always manage to get extra posts created wherever they are posted. When they leave a post, often the posts disappear behind them, but they seem to have far less trouble getting the staff they want than others."

Leadership and authority

> *Hypothesis: That as a result of complex internal and external organizational dynamics and defences, UNHCR experiences a lack of cohesive leadership, direction and containing authority.*

88.   In UNHCR, the boundaries that leaders must draw around the work of their teams often involve human lives and the inclusion and exclusion of those who may receive assistance. While workers at the field level are often closely involved with the dilemmas and life stories of the refugees under their responsibility, their leaders must step away from such intimate knowledge to take into account, for example, the imperatives of funding, donor expectations and priorities, and many other competing issues. At times this might involve betraying not only the expectations and desires of staff but also refugees. It can be argued that the organization is often, albeit unwittingly, engaged in the act of "betraying" their beneficiaries in order to manage the demands and needs of donors when making decisions about funding and priorities.

89.   Each field based team involved in the study were highly absorbed in the day-to-day dilemmas and problems of their own refugee groups and most were struggling with the emotional impact of not being able to meet their needs to the

extent they would like. One way they cope with that is to blame HQ or their own branch offices for being too distant and not understanding what's really going on. In many ways it is a treacherous path for leaders to step away from misery and need and convey or contribute to decisions that they know will cause more suffering, or at the very least, not alleviate it sufficiently. They then to have to deal with the added pressures these decisions place on their staff. In these cases, they face difficult and even harrowing choices.

> "She said that the work is so much now about not being able to meet people's needs and not having the money to do what is required, both by the refugees and by Geneva, that she is not sure that she can continue in the role. She feels that it is the HC's call to contain the amount of work and the range of areas that UNHCR gets involved in, but that he hasn't made that call yet."

90.   The pressures upon leaders within UNHCR to remain loyal to their groups and to at times step out of role are also intensified by the fact that most leaders entered the organization at the lower levels and have worked their way up. As one senior staff member commented,

> "You define your life here by your circle of friends; we're all friends at each level. You can tell the difference between someone who knows us and those who came in from outside. It's layers of friends who rise to the top."

91.   People are particularly bonded by the experiences they have shared, by the crises they have endured together, by the time they have spent in each other's company separate from other social support networks and the sense of family that has been created. Aggression, envy, resentment and anger are readily engendered around moments of seeming betrayal and the parties involved can become paralysed by the emotional impact. To face the negative reactions engendered by acts of authority in the face of long-term friendships and a desire to help all requires an enormous resolve and resilience that many leaders in the organization are unable to maintain over periods of time. Ultimately it can be argued that there are few leaders who don't become affected and "worn down" in some way by the experience of leadership. It is an emotionally demanding role and can lead to defensiveness in the service of protecting oneself from the suffering. Often their response to their own guilt may be to act it out with an excess of harshness that others experience as punitive. As a consequence, there is a considerable degree of feeling across the organization that:

- Decision-making is avoided with people passing the responsibility around, so that often issues are lost or delayed. People also commented that decisions are often made on the basis of pleasing powerful and dominant senior personalities. In addition, decisions seem at time to be made in order to pacify the staff body as represented by the staff council.

  > "We stay safe by having a group make the decisions. The SMC often defers decisions; things get caught in a vortex."

> "Decision making isn't clear, so we develop fantasies about who has the power. This is probably the reason behind (our belief in) the 'mafias'"

- That vision and direction is compromised at both the local and organization wide levels,

> "We lack vision and courage at senior levels. Everything gets decided by committee."

- That leadership is unclear and undermined at every level, and that there is a lack of cohesion and containment,

> "The main weakness in the organization is that there isn't cohesive leadership that pulls everybody together to move in the same direction. There's micromanagement, backstabbing and competition for resources"

> "There is less solidarity than before, among staff and at the level of the senior managers. Now each is looking at their own but not the corporate interest, focussing on their own programme, rather than looking at global issues."

- And that the organization supports many punitive and even abusive managers, so that in some places people feel unsafe,

> "There are still a lot of old style managers who would prefer to terrorise their staff".

> "When staff are confronted by situations, they can forget their principles and become concerned with saving their skins. This has become part of the culture; keep quiet around your supervisor because some are not open to dialogue. Some colleagues are open and this is due to personal development and culture."

92.   Data from the Senior and Middle Management Learning Programmes supports this last point strongly. The majority of both groups, with more senior that middle managers, agreed that abuse by senior staff may be "one of the realities that UNHCR staff need to put up with in the field – there is not much that anyone can do". Participant groups were asked to record their view of assumptions held at UNHCR regarding management. Around half of the groups reported negative attitudes towards management in the organization, 8% reported positive attitudes, and the rest did not provide valid answers. Negative perceptions included that managers in UNHCR can be inconsistent, uneven, poor in quality, not trusted and lacking in strong leadership. Answers indicated that managers are perceived to participate in a culture of ostracism in the organization through the withholding of promotions and career development as punishment. Other frequent comments referred to the difficulties inherent in challenging managers and the lack of training available. Cultural differences in management style were proposed as a possible contributor to perceptions of inconsistency.

Authority, competition and democracy

93.   As a corollary to these comments regarding the ways in which leadership is or is not taken up in the organization, there seems an equal force exerted from below, where leadership and authority is attacked, in connection with the themes of splitting, projection, envy, competition and fairness. There is a strongly defiant attitude within the organization towards authority and leadership. While discussion was more often couched in terms of a critique of leaders or the lack of leadership, it also seemed that in many cases it is extremely difficult for people to lead. The need for everything to be equal, and brought down to the lowest common denominator, in part serves as an attack on authority and leadership, a sign of the proletariat attempting to rule the organization, or perhaps, one could argue, swelling up to fill the vacant space. In joining together to deny and avoid authority, the organization undermines itself and the value that leadership brings. There feels little containment, despite the proliferation of rules and regulations that appear as an attempt in effect to contain the uncontained.

94.   Democracy and consultation are essential, and a characteristic that a number of staff value about the organization, however, many of the stories told implied an almost at times unfettered capacity for the general staff body, represented by the staff council, and particularly in Geneva, to hold up decision making and policy development. While the conscious intent may be to create an inclusive, consultative and democratic environment, and this may be achieved in some circumstances, the underlying drivers as described above have enormous influence in the actual process. Anxiety regarding change, loss of control, competition, envy, etc influences the input that people have, even if outside their awareness, and therefore the end result.

95.   There also seems to be confusion between the ideas of "consultation" and "consensus". Consultation implies the gathering of ideas and opinions, and acknowledgement of needs and positions, without necessarily the promise that all ideas will shape the final outcome. It seemed that in a number of cases, the rotation policy being one prominent example, the process becomes fraught and frustrating for all those involved and affected, and that the final results are often unsatisfactory to all. At some point those with the roles that require taking the broadest view must take and hold decisions based upon an evaluation of all the competing elements. It is not at all being suggested that this never happens, however, there are pervasive and commonly expressed frustrations within the organization regarding such things as the lack of ability to take up new ideas to solve local problems, the slowness of decision-making processes, the reluctance of people to take a decision and the tendency to keep pushing problems up the line, for example.

> "Sometimes there's too much democracy, for example the rotation document. They talked to practically everyone and what came out was the lowest common denominator."

> "Above every manager is another one. No one takes any responsibility; everyone says it is someone else's decision."

96.   What seems to occur is a contradictory dynamic, where on the one hand there is a strongly felt wish on the part of staff to be involved at every level, to act out a collective desire to control and deny the presence of authority, and at the same time

there is a yearning for containment and leadership that can hold these negative impulses and not be overwhelmed by them. People spoke both of their yearning for leadership and of their contempt for it.

> "In the past because of the better environment, there were motivated leaders. They had more authority, maybe it was easier then than now"

> "Managers are often more focused on themselves personally than what goes on at the mandate level"

> "There is an erosion of discipline and respect of the hierarchy that has affected the effectiveness of the institution. Everyone has their own opinion and wants to do it their way. There's an excess of democracy and anarchy"

> "The powerful bogey men don't have as much power as they'd like"

Perceptions of the most senior levels

97.   Many of the issues discussed above were reflected in comments about the dynamics of the Senior Management Committee and the troika, which raises the notion of the paralleling of dynamics throughout the organization and questions to what extent the senior management levels set the tone of what happens at the other layers, and how much they also merely reflect the wider organizational dynamics.

> "I see the organization culture shared and largely originated by our leaders. They didn't invent it, but they grew up in it and contribute to it."

98.   This comment also highlights the fact that very few people come in at a senior level from outside. In this rather closed system there is the potential for binding people to fixed ways of thinking and interpreting the world that may be on some levels out of step with changes, demands and trends in the external world. It also requires that, as at other levels in the organization, people must take on extraordinarily complex and skilled portfolios without necessarily any specialist skills in those areas.

> "There are many individuals of great skill, but are too uniform. All have been here so long, while all the people who have come in from the outside to a senior level have all been spat out."

> "All the senior managers are fit to be senior managers, but not necessarily where they are now. They are competent people with high level thinking, but not always the right people for the right posts."

99.   One of the key and often repeated concerns about the most senior levels of the organization that was shared by virtually all with some experience at HQ, including members of this level themselves, was that while the group comprises highly skilled, well regarded and experienced leaders, their difficulty in working collaboratively together significantly undermines their effectiveness and the organization. It seems

that many of these problems are institutionalised, having been built up and developed over the lifetime of the organization, however this is not to suggest that the current group neither influence the current dynamics, nor are able to do anything about it. Concern about chaos, inconsistency, infighting, lack of vision regarding the bigger picture and splitting between groups and programmes are mirrored and repeated throughout the organization at every level. As both an engine and a mirror of these dynamics, the most senior levels have the greatest capacity to change them for the good of the organization. At the time of final drafting of this report, a number of initiatives are underway indicating a determination to address this problem on some level. This report would stress the need to incorporate cultural and dynamic issues in an exploration of the solutions, as technical restructuring alone will fail to change the problems of authority, collaboration, accountability etc.

> "They're not a coherent body with a common purpose, looking at issues in a whole of organization manner. Individual managers are looking out for their own bureaux. Most of the problems lie at the levels of the directors. Because needs are bigger than resources there's a lot of infighting. No one would share their funds."

> "Constant restructuring comes too frequently. The SMC don't know what they're doing, they go back to previous models."

> "The SMC are almost powerless and because of their inconsistency, the HC can have free range."

Leadership and team outcomes and morale

100. Field-based teams share a number of common elements throughout the organization. They have a similar group of dynamics recreated in each setting by the universal policies, matching structures and experiences between national and international staff, for example, and the fact that the international staff carry the culture of the organization around with them like migrating birds carrying seeds. Most teams participating in the study shared similar burdens and obstacles such as restricted funding, limited resources to meet the needs of their refugees, and a number were also dealing with the impact of downsizing, for example. The teams that retain some sense of optimism and energy are also the ones who report feeling positive about their relationship with their managers. On the other hand, the teams who indicated a level of difficulty with their direct supervisors or local management also tended to be fragmented, less motivated and one could argue, less functional or dynamic despite the presence of many capable workers.

101. This contrast also points to the fact that alongside the high level of concern expressed about the general atmosphere surrounding leadership, there are in fact many extremely talented and effective managers and leaders, at all levels of the organization, whose skills might be capitalised upon in addressing the situation as a whole. Returning to the "both… and" idea, it should therefore be emphasised that UNHCR both experiences significant difficulty in terms of authority and leadership and has fostered the development of many highly effective managers who are facilitating positive outcomes on behalf of the organization.

> "The way it's set up, it all depends on the representative. If you have a (bad quality) rep it will colour every aspect of your life until they leave. If you have a good rep and supervisor it makes the difference."

> "He was very positive about the leadership in this office and said that in his experience the staff group get on very well and seem to have a lot of fun together as well as have good professional relationships."

> "I feel stress related to balancing my relationship with my boss and the problems with him. That is a big stress, the office work suffers because of it."

102.   There is not a strong feeling that leadership and management skills in relation to the management of people is valued generally at an organizational level, despite their direct connection with the level of functioning of a team.

> "As a manager, you create the space you can to do good work, but it's such a transient space. There are limited spaces for good leadership. When you're in the field with a good team, it's such a good experience; you become addicted. You can see what it could be."

103.   A desire to believe that the worthiness of the organization's goals and purpose is sufficient can cloud recognition of the part that human interactions play in the effectiveness and impact of outcomes. Many people are placed in management and leadership roles without any formal preparation and support. Such practices indicate the existence of a belief that management and leadership can be performed through the use of natural ability alone, without the need for additional learning of skills. While the existence of support in the development of skills through the MLP is mostly seen as a positive offering by the organization, many people commented that it is not supported throughout at a senior level, and therefore it becomes confusing and disillusioning when the programme says managers should do things in a certain way and they experience their own managers doing the opposite.

104.   As indicated above, there is a perception amongst some in the organization that many managers are oriented towards criticism rather than positive reinforcement and that this may in fact be a quality that is regarded as competent by the organization. This influences where people wish to be posted and creates an anxiety that the organization will not protect people from being posted with a negative or abusive manager. It could be argued that field postings where for example, international staff are removed from their wider social supports and national staff have insecure tenure, are some of the very situations where competence in leadership is of vital importance. Geographical isolation means that there are fewer opportunities for back up and alternative forms of support. Particularly at the field level, skilled managers also have the potential to shield their teams from some of the wider politics and problematic dynamics and to foster a positive and productive work environment, and there are many places where this appears to be the case. In contrast, in situations where relationships are poor, there is the potential for the experiencing of problems in the wider system to be in fact exacerbated. Managers are not only responsible for the logistical and technical arrangements in the field, but are

also potentially the main source of personal and emotional support for their workers as well as having responsibility for a host of practical arrangements. The additional demands these responsibilities place upon field-based managers can create a high degree of stress, and therefore the ability to manage the emotional demands of the role both for oneself and in relation to others is vital for the performance of the team as a whole. In addition, as was emphasised by many participants in the research, poor quality management has a direct impact on the quality of services to refugees.

105. A realistic goal for leaders involved in a constant act of balancing conflicting tensions, such as those outlined above, is to navigate what is referred to as a "good enough" path through them. "What is required is heroic ordinariness and toughness" (Binney et al, 2003:6). Some of the key aspects of leadership identified in longitudinal research with international organizations as being the most effective, were, in the words of the researchers, "dramatically ordinary stuff". That is, leaders who:

- Had the capacity to connect with both the people around them and with the task

- Facilitated their teams in having realistic and open conversations about their goals and processes

- Were known to advocate for their groups when necessary

- Made effective links with the organization outside their groups. (Binney et al 2003:4)

HQ / field divide and perceptions

Hypothesis: That the volume of frameworks, guidelines and reporting requirements imposed by HQ on the field in part represents a response to anxiety about the capabilities of staff and the magnitude of the task, and exacerbates conflict and distance between HQ and the field.

106. As mentioned already, there is significant and predictable rivalry, splitting and mixed feelings in the organization between the field and HQ. The relationship between branch offices and their bureaux in HQ tend to be shaped by the quality and familiarity of the relationships between specific individuals. Many field offices reported being very satisfied with the relationship they have with their bureau in particular. Many people felt that the success of this relationship depended entirely upon individual personality, and that it was luck and knowing people in person that made the difference. The value of personal contact and relationship cannot be underestimated in its ability to reduce the impact of distance and unconscious processes as described previously.

"I'm fortunate to have been in HQ because I know the structures and the people, especially with the continuity of general staff in Geneva. I've always had access. A lot of colleagues don't have that access; they're reluctant to ask questions"

"Sometimes Geneva is not transparent to the field. Who you can contact. There is some feeling here that whenever you approach Geneva, you better have very good grounds."

107.   The situation is somewhat different when considering the perceptions held in the field towards other programme areas at HQ with whom they are far less likely to have personal contact. In general, field staff expressed feeling somewhat persecuted by the unrestrained and uncoordinated demands of HQ for reports and the absorption of enormous amounts of information in the form of policies, guidelines, etc, as is discussed further below. Many people commented that such splitting between HQ and the field, which is often also paralleled between branch and sub offices, is predictable and unavoidable, that people will always complain that they are not understood or don't receive what they need. While one of the aims of the rotation policy seems to be to reduce this problem, there are a number of other factors that get in the way of it achieving much more than small inroads, some of which are explored further below.

"There is an us and them feeling. When we get nasty emails, we realise we're in our own little world, we lose touch, despite the fact that all communication possibilities are there. It's partly also that the resource allocation process is not very transparent or user friendly; deals are made in the corridor regarding limited resources. Sometimes we forget in the frantic state of affairs, we forget to consult."

"People in HQ tend to forget the field, but they will eventually move back. They will be punished for this neglect when they go back to the field"

"HQ are kings and we are nothing in the field. They either leave us alone or micromanage us"

The locus of control

108.   To some extent there is an active power struggle between senior levels of staff in the field and HQ. People who are used to a certain degree of authority and autonomy can find it difficult to manage the need for quick and responsive action at the field level and the necessity to incorporate so much disparate and at times uncoordinated involvement from HQ. There seems a high degree of understanding and acceptance of these conflicts, however people use a range of strategies to manage, contain and even survive them.

"If you have a good team, you can continue independently of Geneva. I listen to crazy things from Geneva and if we think it is crazy we leave it aside. I'm too exhausted to keep battling. Sometimes it's better not to listen to them."

"There are so many priorities we should be taking care of but we can't. Geneva expects us to do everything at the same time because it looks good to donors. They don't care so much about quality. Because Geneva receives so many pressures from donors, they look

at how to cut and eliminate refugees from countries. Its so difficult to fight – they're always looking to cut posts and budgets."

"He feels that as a rep he has sufficient autonomy and authority to do his job. He said that the reps who are under the radar are well off, but the ones in politically sensitive places are subject to micromanagement that can be difficult to function with."

Guidelines and reporting requirements

109.   One of the most significant points of concern in the field regarding HQ is the volume of material that is generated by HQ with a high degree of expectation for compliance and cooperation from the field. The degree to which the field feel bombarded by requests for information, demands for reports and expectations to read and absorb new guidelines creates, as mentioned above, a feeling of persecution. It may be argued that the ceaseless production of frameworks, guidelines and reporting requirements in part represents a response to anxiety about the capabilities and preparedness of staff and about the difficulties inherent in the wider organizational task. The desire to simplify what is complex, to contain what is messy and to find success in ambiguity has a significant impact on the nature of relationships between HQ and field staff, the latter having to deal with incongruence and tension caused by what is not being measured and addressed on a day-to-day basis. For example;

> "Our reporting doesn't mean much, numbers matter to raise funds, for e.g., 20,000 refugees receive one million. At the end of the year we say that their needs were met, but there's no proper analysis of how the needs were met, or our contribution as compared with other sources. Why bother engaging in such an analysis exercise if it's not going to get funds? As long as there are no massive deportations and haven't got into the media, everything's ok."

110.   The uncoordinated manner of these demands, with little recognition of the consequences of the volume, builds a sense of lack of containment, an expression of the anxiety within the organization to get it right, to meet donor needs and to attempt to control that which is extremely difficult to control. Frustration is increased in the field by the belief that many of the reports they do submit are not read or responded to.

> "It's huge the amount of information on everything; there's no way everyone can know everything. It's gone too far, there's a lack of trust that staff aren't going to do it right. Maybe it's a control issue"

> "Reports and plans are useful tools but the processes have become big and elaborate. We're eventually sapped dry of creativity. You could do that stuff (that is required) and never get to innovating things. You need to be enormously energetic to get small things done"

> "We were asked to do a four page report; no problem. But I had a problem with 40 pages of instructions to get the four pages. I have to

read them. There is a disconnect between departments and HQ and the field. It's very difficult when under pressure to read it all; all has substance and reality, but often it's not consistent."

Experience in HQ

111. Many international staff at HQ identify more strongly with the field, while many others have been in Geneva longer, much to the dissatisfaction of many of their colleagues. Other factors such as the size of HQ, the length of time it takes to establish social and support networks when coming in from the field, the highly competitive and at times judgemental and critical environment, the distance from the beneficiary population and proximity to donor and other politics, combine together to shape the morale and experience of those working in HQ.

> "People who come into Geneva are strangled and change when they come in from the field"

112. There is also a significant divide between many rotating professional staff and the long term G level staff who are not required to rotate. The sheer numbers of G staff in HQ mean that the dynamics between them and international staff staff vary somewhat from those in the field, while there are also some similarities. Many HQ based G staff are highly sensitive to perceptions of lower status, as is also often the case in the field. Some expressed resentment related to feeling undervalued and regarded as less profesional or capable. The fact that G level staff in Geneva don't experience the field, but have high salaries compared to their counterparts in developing countries sets them apart from both international and field based G staff, rendering them also a target for resentment by others. For example, many G staff at HQ are perceived by international staff to take up a negative, complaining role within the organization, which can have the effect of "locking" them into almost an ownership of the distress in HQ when they in fact do take up this role. This has an impact on the credibility of their complaints, and exacerbates the split, where they can be seen as carrying the responsibility for much of the negative dynamics.

> "There are a lot of national staff in Geneva. They set a culture here."

> "They don't have the same set of cultural values. They have different career expectations. They are driven by salaries and jobs and have a significant influence on the culture of HQ."

113. There is a general perception that the various programme areas within HQ do not communicate and co-ordinate well, despite their proximity, perhaps reflecting a level of competition and lack of trust.

> "The lack of coordination between sections is also a problem for him. He said that when one mess occurs through lack of planning and coordination, it sparks off another mess as a consequence, which ends up as a bigger mess that the organization then is unable to resolve."

114. There is some evidence that there is a higher incidence of psychological and physical ill health amongst HQ staff, indicating the potentially detrimental impact of the environment and dynamics there. According to a recent presentation regarding

the health of UNHCR staff, sick leave is increasing in UNHCR and HQ is over represented in sick leave cases. In 2003 the amount of sick leave taken was equivalent to 70 effective full time positions throughout the year. Psychological problems constituted the most frequent reason for sick leave taken in HQ and it seems that the vast majority of reasons given for psychological symptoms were related to organizational issues, such as negative interpersonal relationships, perceived unfairness, lack of recognition, change, workload, and the working environment. In a similar vein, the nature of complaints made to medical, welfare services and staff council were predominantly regarding interpersonal relationship difficulties, issues of perceived injustice or unfair treatment and problems with coping. While further work has and is being done with regard to the health status of UNHCR workers, it is worth considering to what degree people in HQ are in fact suffering from higher levels of illness, or whether the environment in HQ is such that it is more possible than it is in the field to actually take sick leave and the incentives to remain at work are less.

Human resources

> *Hypothesis: That Human Resources and administrative staff tend to carry a burden for the organization as a whole, holding responsibility in people's minds for how difficult the work is and the conflict created is exacerbated by defensive responses.*

115. In contexts where humanitarian endeavours are carried out in an atmosphere of ambiguous and limited successes, or even perceived as failing such as in ongoing and unresolved conflicts, the stresses upon aid workers can be considerable, leading to a fear of personal responsibility (Vaux 2001). In such difficult circumstances, a common human response is to find others in whom to locate the responsibility. Perhaps on some level, the remote and less known people responsible for HR, administration and senior management, with their seemingly overly bureaucratic policies and procedures, unwittingly present themselves as a worthy target to carry blame for the difficulties experienced in carrying out a mission effectively. The significance of organizational issues may be intensified through increased need, pressure and expectation, potentially magnifying even minor inconveniences into intolerable injustices. In this way, HR and administrative staff tend to carry a burden for the organization as a whole, holding responsibility in people's minds for how difficult the work is. In a culture of blame and a sense of "splitting off" of administrative sections, who "don't know what it is like in the field", it is likely that communication and relationship difficulties are intensified. Administrative staff may feel "under siege", unappreciated, and possibly resentful of the blame they experience for many factors beyond their control, and no doubt often respond in kind, confirming perceptions of them as punitive and unhelpful.

> "You often hear complaints about HR. There's a lot of GS staff who use rules to whip staff. You get abuse by junior staff even if you're senior; you have to battle to get your rights, to get the rules to have some flexibility"

> "HR policies are changed very frequently. Staff are sometimes lost and confused by their entitlements. There's more stress for staff trying to work out the policies; staff are flexible and adapt to changes

quickly but can't do this continuously. Every six months we have different changes and staff become stressed"

"Admin should be implemented consistently everywhere. It creates a big distance between field offices. People treat us poorly because we're field, HQ don't see themselves as serving us. They don't communicate between themselves; they hide behind IOMFOMS and act impersonally. It doesn't feel like they want to help you."

116.   In 1995, Macnair completed a research paper commissioned by the Relief and Rehabilitation Network through the Overseas Development Institute in London, entitled "Room for Improvement: The Management and Support of Relief and Development Workers". Around half of all workers, both managers and non-managers, listed organizational issues as amongst the most stressful factors in their jobs, along with workload, witnessing suffering and security. The report concluded that occupational stress derived as much from inadequate management practices, workload and the insecurity of short-term contracts, as from the danger and emotional impact of aid work itself. Overall, the study found that human resource management issues had a central role in the quality and effectiveness of aid programmes (Macnair 1995). In the same way that the skills and qualities required by workers in the field have become more complex as the nature of the work has changed, the need for improvement in the quality of organizational functioning is seen as critical.

The placing of unqualified people into specialist positions

117.   Contrasted with the importance of skill level in certain areas of operations is the practice of rotating staff through a range of programme areas. As with the discussion related to the learning of leadership skills, there appears a belief that many functions within the organization can be learned quickly and performed by anyone. This practice both denies the high degree of specialist knowledge and expertise required for many roles, and forces people with limited experience in such areas to learn and potentially falter in front of their colleagues. Being able to learn in the public environment of an organization requires being able to tolerate not knowing many aspects of the role, particularly at the beginning, and a capacity to tolerate the vulnerability inherent in needing to learn from others. Resistance to learning may therefore be stimulated by the feelings of failure and inadequacy that are aroused before the skill is fully mastered and incorporated into the self (Levine 2002).

118.   Many people have managed to overcome this dilemma by developing some areas of expertise and perhaps using their networks to assist them in securing posts that exploit these skills. A few others also expressed a love of changing roles and "being thrown into the deep end", and in their case, the "not knowing" is experienced as an invigorating challenge. However, given how much may be at stake in some operational responsibilities, the potential for anxiety may be enormous. In such contexts, the capacity to learn a great deal of new material may be further reduced, and when attempting to avoid feelings of failure, the likelihood is that creativity, innovation, and risk are suppressed. This presents significant consequences for organizational learning and development.

"She talked about how in any good operation that has a high profile, the source of its success can be traced back to one or two really key and talented people who are responsible for the success. She feels that this shouldn't be the case – that the organization's successes and failures are so dependent upon the talent of individuals, because the organization is vulnerable to having its operations fail for the very same reasons, and its reputation then is also affected in particular regions where the staff do not have the skills required. These skills aren't regarded with the degree of importance that they should be."

119.   As is highlighted in this excerpt, an underlying implication of such policies is that character is substituted for skill. There is an assumption that people should be good enough, clever enough and know the organization well enough to not require specialist skills in taking on certain roles. Again, the belief that the worthiness of the organization's goals and purpose is sufficient may be clouding recognition of the important part that skill, expertise and specific experience play in the effectiveness and impact of outcomes. The inherent risk is that placing people in jobs they are not qualified for both potentially sets them up to fail and reduces the capacity of the organization through the reduction of specific expertise and innovation. There is in some areas a feeling of an organization "making it up as it goes along", reinventing policy over and over because no one has the expertise to get it right in the first place, nor the patience to see things through over time. As one senior person said,

"The next HC won't find a solid organization. They will find one based on gifted amateurism that will fully depend on personal leadership skills. The future depends on the skills of the next HC."

Perceptions between interest groups across the organization

Hypothesis: Conflict and difference between sub and interest groups across the organization contribute to diversity and vitality, but also express organizational defences such as splitting, competition and envy, where stories of the "other" reflect stereotypes and perceptions of threat, exclusion and nepotism.

120.   Cultural diversity within and across organizations is inevitable because the differing nature of peoples' jobs demands it. Cultural conflict between groups within the one organization can help to maintain the vitality and diversity of the organization as well as contribute to dissonance and frustration. The boundaries between different reference and sub groups, according to, for example, functions, positions or job types, form sites at which organization culture is most clearly formed and experienced.

"There is the culture and then the subcultures. These relate to functions, to national origin of people. People talk about mafias and cultural groups. Also how teams form for specific operations and then dismantle, for example ex Bosnia, ex East Timor or ex Kosovo, people who worked on emergency phases that marked them deeply. This has structured their way of thinking through the organization. The issue of geographical groups is sensitive, not politically correct."

121. From within these even at times loosely formed sub groupings, comments by one cultural group about another within the organization often reflect cultural stereotypes and perceptions, where "the other" is at times perceived as somewhat threatening, nepotistic or exclusionary. People regularly talked about "other" groups who had the power and influence, and while the groups being discussed were wide and varied, they were never the group that the speaker belonged to.

Mission camaraderie

122. It seems acceptable to identify oneself with an interest group, even as a "mafia", if that interest group was acquired through a work role and not as a function of one's gender, sexuality or race, for example.

> "Groups who have worked together can cut across all nationalities. The bond stays."

> "Camaraderie comes from sharing experiences in the field. But I don't like our rejection of outsiders and the fact that we're threatened by anything different. Outsiders find it hard to understand the culture; they start to feel threatened or isolated. I can't see it working better because people who have come up through the ranks have done all the hard yards; they've bonded."

123. This last quote points out the exclusion that this bonding can create, or highlight, in the case of new people coming in to the organization. This dynamic is not reserved, however, only for outsiders, as it is also experienced within the organization by people who were not a part of the high profile missions and therefore feeds into feelings of exclusion within as well.

Programme and protection

124. Organization culture and sub cultures affect the way the central purpose of providing protection and assistance to refugees is interpreted and implemented. There is at times disagreement between protection and programme staff as to priorities and means, for example, as there are often a number of ways in which the work might be carried out. The large number of lawyers in the organization allows a significant and powerful professional sub grouping and there is considerable conflict and competition regarding who determines priorities and how the work of different groups is viewed and valued.

> "Others see certain functions as core and look down on other people because they believe their function is more important. Protection wants to see their function as the mandate rather than a function. This has positive and negative implications."

> "There should be a natural marriage between protection and programme, but this has not been successfully managed. It creates breaks in the overall thinking of the institution"

"There are no conflicts (here in the field) between different programme areas. We work together, plan together. Sometimes our workload may not permit; we may be overwhelmed by that."

National culture

125.   The majority of participants in the Management Learning Programmes thought that UNHCR is aware of and recognizes cultural diversity. Participants commented that UNHCR seeks to create a fair environment for all and diversity was noted as a source of pride. Some groups criticised the way cultural groups stay together and as one participant said "there is a feeling of whites versus black or blacks versus brown. This is another means of politicisation". Cross referenced with results from other units, where participants indicated that the organization should promote and protect cultural and other diversity instead of staying neutral to it and its impact on the work, it seems that while participants find UNHCR to be sensitive to diversity, they would still like to see the organization take more initiative on this issue.

126.   How friendship groups form, who advocates and lobbies for whom and who is chosen for a posting often, but not always, reflects on some level international relations between national groups. People may be drawn to others from their own country, region, religion, gender or sexual preference, for example, due to common cultural understandings. However when these groups are from "the other", they become more noticeable, examples of a few become generalised across the whole group and exclusion from that group evokes more complaint.

127.   As a reflection of the world at large, the group that appears in fact to have the most power and advantage are those who fulfil at least two of the following criteria: white, male, Anglophone or fluent in English. This group is the least recognised as a group by those within it, due to its lack of clear homogeneity, and advantage is often gained through subtle means. For example;

> "The issue of geographical groups is sensitive, not politically correct. Asian, Latino, African, Pan Arab. I don't think there is a European group. European people are not united, there is no solidarity. I don't know if, for example, the African groups would have the same perceptions."

128.   Sub groups and interest groups don't need to be clearly organised and of one mind to have significant influence. For example, it was commented that of two people with equal qualifications, skills and experience, the one who is able to express themselves most fluently in English is most likely to be the one whose career advances more rapidly. The growing predominance of Anglophony in the world at large is reflected in the organization with the gradual diminution of the standing of other UN laguages such as French and Spanish. As a French man said, "we struggled and struggled, but in the end, we have to admit that English has won!"

> "The office used to have at least two languages. Language is a vehicle of culture, but today the whole house has become totally English. French brings a different culture, the languages in which you read give you a knowledge and access to more ways of thinking. I regret it because I think any international organization should try to

keep possibilities for universal influence. It will be terrible if we become McDonalds, we need to keep the richness of culture"

129. Examples of behaviour that people across all nationalities described as common to the organization include the use of networks and lobbying in order to assist one's career, and the tendency of managers to recruit people they know or who are recommended by people they know, as discussed previously. In a similar vein, but with a slight variation, people suggested that certain groups also recruited relatives, or people from their own region. There is an often-cited belief that Africans, and the less often cited example of staff from the Middle East, use "nepotism" more, however this also seemed to happen amongst other groups including Europeans, but is not similarly recognised or acknowledged. When these kinds of practices were pointed out, it was usually done so in a critical manner, as though this was clearly wrong and without recognition of the similarities between these practices and those that others engage in. It seems that it is somewhat acceptable to many to employ a friend but perhaps less so if the friend is from the same cultural background, for example.

> "Perceptions are probably mainly myth that groups are organizing the career development of their groups. You can see this in the career paths of some people. Some people only rotate within a certain region; they enjoy protection from the leaders of their group. This is like with any tribal group; support the leader and they will benefit you."

> "The dynamics of the group in the Middle East, career development from leaders, they expect the network of members to be loyal and feed them information. You have to service your leader in a specific way. They communicate by telephone rather than e-mail, so that the most important information is never written down. Loyalty is more solid than the structural set up of the region. When outsiders are posted to that region there is often a communication gap and little hope for support. You remain an outsider. If you are European, to join African or Middle Eastern groups is not easy."

> "Sometimes decisions on postings are made on national preferences. This shouldn't exist in a truly multinational organization. The organization has not taken any measures to address this because of the balance of power. They don't want to shake things up or look into underlying causes. They would have to turn over the recruitment process."

130. A number of African staff commented upon how difficult it was to gain a posting outside Africa or Geneva, giving another side to the story. This was reinforced by a number of staff in other regions who cited Africans as the example of staff from other regions who might not know enough about their region to be able to work effectively there. It is significant as well to note that in these contexts, people refered to Africans as though they are an homogenous group, and not from a vast collection of very distinct countries and backgrounds.

> "I have a feeling that the different ethnicities are getting more and more close to themselves. You get locked into your own area, which

teaches staff to get locked in. This is bad; you have to know the region and how people live, but anyone can develop the skills."

131. The notions of equal application of policy and evidence of nepotism provide an effective means to stifle discussion and debate and to accuse people of actions that appear to have self-interest. Nepotism is often linked to national or regional culture, an example of how international race related dynamics are played out within the organization. The example has been given that Africans are often accused of nepotism and of having too much power, when in fact currently they probably realistically have much less power than white men in the organization. Anything that can be accused of nepotism has become a bad thing, and nepotism is also linked to notions of African-ness, even if it occurs across different nationalities. Even if historically there has been significant basis upon which these beliefs have been founded, currently it provides another example of splitting and projection and represents a dynamic that should be of considerable concern to the organization. National culture offers an obvious avenue for the acting out of splitting, projection and competition. In such an environment one might also hypothesise that at times people may feel inclined to retreat to the relative safety of people they feel more connected to, exacerbating the divisions further. This is not to say that many people are not also very positive about the multicultural nature of the organization, and despite these divisions, there are very many examples of people getting on well across national groups and working effectively together.

> "People group themselves and in a corporate culture it might be acceptable for social groups to further their agenda, but in this organization groups are based on the basis of colour, race, religion, language. It's not a nice feeling. I don't think there is a conscious effort to manage it except when senior management has seen that one group has become particularly strong."

> "We have so many mixed profiles here; these are an unwritten strength"

> "Sometimes people don't want to understand each other. They're not open to other ideas. For example, they won't listen to a quiet (Asian) guy."

Nationals and internationals

> *Hypothesis: The differences between international and national staff conditions, that are also reflected in status and power within the organization, provide some uncomfortable parallels with colonialism, and the dynamics created are played out by many organizational members.*

132. The inter-relations between different national groups, while highly complex, does also to some extent reflect socio-political power relations in the world at large. For example, the national staff based in Geneva have far better terms and conditions of employment than the national staff based in poorer and developing countries. The differences between international and national staff conditions are reflected in terms of status and power within the organization, and provide some uncomfortable parallels with colonialism. It may be argued that there are many constraints that

contribute to this situation, many of which are outside the control of the organization itself, however the dynamics this environment creates are played out by many organizational members. This power imbalance and the dynamics that arise out of it lead to many complaints of disrespectful behaviour between staff of different statuses and nationalities, and lead to the significant frustration and disillusionment of not all, but many national staff. Thus in addition to a broader socio-political view, it is also possible to reflect upon the differentials between national and international staff as a further example, and an institutionalised example, of splitting in the organization.

133. The divisions between national and international staff are set within the differences in pay structures, which perhaps cannot be resolved, however there also seems to be an element of racism embedded within the system in, for example, the differences between the statuses of national staff in Geneva and in the field. As mentioned earlier, the national staff in Geneva are perceived as powerful, privileged and very openly discontented, whereas the dynamic in the field varies. National field staff are variously grateful for the jobs they have, resentful about or indifferent to their lower status, and anxious about their job insecurity. In addition, perceived disinterest at the HQ level regarding particular field situations such as long serving national staff who are graded significantly below their responsibilities and experience, or local discrepancies in pay scales, impacts on morale and commitment at a field level. This example of the distancing of the organization from situations in the field that have a significant impact on morale and optimism, also highlights the lack of real authority that can be achieved at the local level to respond to local needs and solve relatively straightforward local problems.

> "Professional staff don't treat national staff as equals".

> "There is a general respect between nationals and internationals here"

> "They rely on us as locals but then don't treat us as well"

> "We can feel sorry for the internationals because they have to travel back and forth. They're separated from their families. I have no jealousies."

> "The divide between nationals and internationals is a weakness of the organization (said by a group of internationals). National staff are the backbone of the operation; we complement each other to some extent."

134. The internal report entitled "The State of UNHCR Staff", written in 2000, identified many of the same issues that are still present today, which gives rise to a question as to what gets in the way of change occurring. For example:

> "Some of the problems are inherent, in the nature of the arrangement, or there is the fact that there are limited career prospects for many local staff. The impact of these inherent problems on UNHCR's effectiveness would be reduced if this was recognised (clarity on real career prospects being an obvious example) and if

treatment of national staff was more uniform, transparent and predicable."

135. Further, specific issues identified in the research are outlined below. Some considerable space is devoted to this topic given that national staff constitute such a large proportion of the organization. It should be acknowledged however, that data was gained primarily from three regions; East and the Horn of Africa, the Balkans and South East Asia, and therefore specific regional variations in dynamics between national and international staff may exist in other areas that have not been picked up on.

International authority

136. International staff generally always have authority over national staff, despite qualifications and experience and this can mean that for instance, a young JPO with no management experience may be the supervisor of someone with more than 20 years of experience in the organization. Many national staff accept this situation and said that the quality of communication, clarity of direction and respect shown were more important factors in this relationship than age or experience differences. However, a number of national staff expressed resentment at their inability to aspire to more senior roles and to enjoy a more full career path.

Disparity between authority and responsibility

137. Some field-based national professional staff felt that their roles and responsibilities were often equivalent to or even at times exceeding those of their international counterparts, and the differences in their status and conditions was a source of considerable resentment.

> "We are considered as less important staff members. The local staff should be seen as the backbone. Usually international staff assume we're not competent; this reflects on our grades. We have a lot of responsibility, but on paper we don't."

> "Being strict with posts doesn't correspond with being strict with responsibilities. We have much responsibility above our levels. We're used as the institutional memory; the organization uses that."

Respect for local knowledge

138. Many national staff expressed a sense of hurt and frustration that their local and cultural knowledge was often not sought or heard by their international colleagues, resulting at times in problematic situations that the nationals then felt they were required to sort out.

> "Often the international staff don't understand the culture of the locals and they don't take the time to find out. He said it's frustrating when the locals are aware that a decision that is made will have a negative outcome due to cultural issues, but the internationals are reluctant to consult or take their views into consideration. As a

result, he says he keeps quiet now and his attitude is that if they refuse to take their views into account, then they must bear the consequences of their decisions on their own."

"The culture of national and international staff promotes a system where ownership is displaced. National staff never feel fully responsible; it's an international organization. It prevents real problems facing beneficiaries to be dealt with because the local staff are the only ones who could identify them"

139. At times this reluctance to take into account the knowledge and experience of locals is perceived as outright favouritism between international staff towards each other and an expression of dynamics of power, domination and exclusion, on both a local and an organization wide level.

"If an international says this is white, even if it's black it will be white"

"He said that he feels that at times the more senior staff in the office here give a greater weight to the opinions and preferences of the other international staff. So that even if he would be most suited to taking on a job, it will often be given to an international staff member"

"I have to take responsibility for mistakes, but my supervisor takes on my achievements. This happens to each of us one way or another"

Differential and discriminatory treatment and conditions

140. Such feelings are further exacerbated by some clear differences in conditions and regulations between the two categories of staff, over and above the pay differentials, for example, lack of access to training or career development by G level national staff, different evacuation rules, and recognition of service. Whatever the logic or reasoning behind such differences, they are often experienced as discriminatory and a sign that the organization cares for and values them less.

"He said that he had been in a more senior position in the past but his post was cut during a restructure. A new post was created that was the same as one of the positions he had had in the past, but it had been downgraded. As two posts were cut, he and the other staff member were forced to compete with each other for the job, which was demotion for both of them, even though it was the same job."

"Local staff are not included in the evacuation rules. But they're the ones often first targeted; working for the UN may make you a target. There's a feeling that if anything happens you will be on your own. Most locals wouldn't accept to be evacuated without their families"

Differences in the inter-cultural divides

141. Some national staff commented that the intercultural divides are more pronounced between nationals and white internationals, and between nationals and less experienced internationals. From their perspective, an understanding of local cultural nuances was critical to operational success.

> "If they come from a more rich and famous country, they think they are better than others, particularly if you come from a minority from the mountains without much education, they won't choose to be friends."

Separation

142. The tendency of internationals to keep to themselves can cause some offence to national staff, particularly when the separation is institutionalised.

> "Even though the nationals and internationals were working side by side (during the emergency), their living arrangements and conditions were separate. The nationals were placed in a building with no roof and were given a tarpaulin to cover themselves. They weren't given any mosquito nets, and we wondered whether this meant there was an assumption that they were somehow immune to malaria. He said that the nationals were given a tin of fish and some beans every day to eat and he didn't know if the internationals had the same rations as they never ate together."

Becoming an international

143. Many nationals expressed feeling despair regarding whether they would ever make it into the international category. Some said that it could only happen with the right networks, and some felt that if they came from a less influential country there was little hope for them. Others were optimistic, and many did not aspire to change their status as they didn't want to make the required sacrifices.

> "I get discouraged. I aspire to be an international, but sometimes I feel I'm not destined to be one. My fear is that if I don't have someone to support me, it's the personal acquaintance. If you work your job properly, what does personality have to do with it? But at times it doesn't work like that."

> "People say what's the point of working your (butt) off just to be duped again. It would be so hard to achieve international status, what's the point in aspiring"

Job insecurity

144. The tenuousness of employment of many of the national staff is naturally a source of great stress. The way post cuts are being handled has some local influence on the experience of job insecurity, as do the prospects for alternate employment and

the local economic situation. While the need to downsize certain operations gives a reality to the situation that cannot be avoided, there is at times a sense of ruthlessness and arbitrariness that perhaps reflects the stress placed upon the internationals who have to make and or carry out the decisions as to who will lose their jobs. One international said that if any national staff make a mistake, they know they will be the next on the list to be cut, and that this was keeping people highly motivated and performing well. On the other hand, many national staff from the same offices commented as to how difficult it was to maintain motivation under the ever-present threat of a job loss. This was particularly the case in situations where people feared that the decisions around who would lose their jobs might rest upon interpersonal issues and an abuse of the power differential. One international staff member told of their experience as a national surviving three separate threatened post cuts before finally securing an international post, and the long term stress that this had created.

> "Job stability is zero. They have thought well of looking after the international staff."

> "There's an incredible fear that you can be summarily dismissed. It's part of the mentality that you're powerless; still feel that the person doing the CMS has all the power."

> "He was contemptuous about the staff who had talked about their experiences during the crisis. He wanted to dismiss their experiences as nothing and compared the number of times he had been in danger. I was struck by a level of competition and bitterness, as though people who hadn't seen as much fighting but were affected by what they saw were weak. He went on to tell me about how his post had been cut and how devastated he was about that. We discussed how losing his job was more traumatic than all the danger, and I wondered whether his contempt of the other staff was also related to some bitterness about them having permanent jobs and him now being on a temporary position."

145. This last journal excerpt gives a good example of how deeply affected people can be by the insecurity and uncertainty of their positions, along with their traumatic experiences, and how this may colour their perceptions of their colleagues and influence interactions and dynamics.

Unique stressors for national staff

146. National staff are often exposed to different levels and types of stressors than their international colleagues. Generally they spend far more time on a day-to-day basis with refugees, dealing with their ongoing issues, complaints and unmet needs, while the international staff often take a more distant position. Many groups talked about the impact of being personally and professionally involved in the local crisis situations and how at times they were compromised or particularly unsafe because of their own ethnicity. The closeness that some groups of national staff experience to their work situations challenges their personal boundaries and can render them more vulnerable to stress reactions. There was a strong perception that national staff were the least likely to receive any formal support from the organization regarding the stress of their work, whether through direct support and coaching provided by

managers, or through welfare services, despite the availability of welfare services for all staff..

> "Rest and recuperation, MARS, VARI; the organization didn't think about local staff. We went through all the stages of the emergency and we never had the breaks. We were all the time there. They organised a stress session, but it was here and we couldn't attend because we had to work. The international staff have to be relieved of stress even now (that it's not an emergency), but we are told that we are used to local conditions."

147. This issue of closeness and boundaries can be pronounced for staff who are of the same ethnic group as the refugees, but of a different group to both their national and international colleagues.

> "He talked about his feelings that people look down on both him and the refugees because of their ethnicity. Sometimes his understanding of the ways of the refugees is not taken into account and he feels that people here are not humanitarian enough in their hearts. He feels that people don't lower themselves enough to really listen and understand what the refugees are saying. He said that at times the refugees tell him about their sadness and that he refers this on to the staff, but they often don't listen, and this makes him sad."

148. Limited career opportunities and rules regarding promotions for national staff are most acutely felt at times by G level staff who want to make more of their careers. Some of them expressed frustration that their lack of status within the organization led to them being somewhat invisible and that their particular concerns were often not taken up to a senior level.

> "He said that his supervisor gives him poor ratings on his PAR. He felt this is unfair and while he has good reports from the senior people he has driven, the problems in this relationship create difficulties for him that no one else can see. I thought about how powerless the drivers are when a situation like this occurs."

> "I am only a driver, I don't know if my opinion matters".

JPOs and UNVs

> *Hypothesis: That the strong desire of many JPOs and UNVs to secure longer term employment with UNHCR leads to a situation where their desire and ambition is inadvertently, but perhaps cynically, exploited.*

149. Research into human resources issues in the aid industry found that the use of short-term contracts was very unsettling and detrimental to career prospects. The use of short-term contracts, and the associated unlikelihood of further employment if a contract is cut short, was perceived as part of the pressure placed by organizations on their workers to withstand unfavourable conditions (Macnair 1995). While there are significant differences between employment conditions in the UN and those of international NGOs, some parallels exist with the different status and conditions that JPOs, UNVs and more recently employed staff work under. As not everyone is

employed under the same conditions, the "have" and the "have not" status differences and splitting are compounded and exaggerated.

150. A common theme when discussing both JPO and UNV situations was the widespread use of these staff above and beyond what they are contracted to do, which is somewhat understandable given the pressures on the organization and the lack of staff in many areas. In the context of tenuous long-term employment possibilities, however, it also becomes a form of exploitation.

> "There should be more boundaries around our role as UNVs. Sometimes I feel abused. There's no rewards for being a UNV and taking on such responsibilities."

> "We have three excellent UNVs. They're doing more than we can expect. We can't use them for everything."

151. The majority of JPOs and UNVs participating in the study expressed a strong desire to stay with the organization, but also felt under enormous pressure to work extraordinarily hard and not complain, lest they damage their chances. Given how slim many perceive these chances to be, (and realistically so, for example the report "The State of UNHCR's Staff" identified that these staff faced a "reinforced concrete ceiling") there is considerable resentment regarding their lower status, the amount expected from them, and, in the case of UNVs, the lower pay they receive.

> "There's a pressure to be good. You're hoping for future employment"

> "You need to know that the organization cares about you; are they going to ask 12 hours a day and then say see you later? It's intentional to keep us (UNVs) on our toes. We're not meant to be comfortable."

> "They get a lot of work done through UNVs, but UNHCR is least open for recruitment. It's almost impossible to get a job from being a UNV. They're being deceived about their prospects."

152. The lack of choice and influence within the organization means that in some cases, highly qualified staff are required to undertake roles that don't utilise their skills and knowledge in a way that is satisfying to them. Some JPOs and UNVs who came to the organization with a wealth of experience from other organizations also expressed resentment at their lower status. This wasn't the case across the board, but came up a number of times, and seems to be more common in HQ or branch offices, rather than in sub offices. The limited staffing numbers in more remote field postings means that JPOs and UNVs are given more responsibilities, and while they still work extremely long hours, seem more satisfied on the whole with the work they were doing.

153. Alongside these feelings of resentment and despair in many is a strong sense of commitment and desire to remain with the organization. In fact some of the more negative feelings are in part exacerbated by this strong desire to find a long term "home" in UNHCR and the jealousy experienced when working alongside people who have a secure position, and who may even be perceived to take it for granted.

"It's a great contract being a JPO. We're privileged, we still have a learning component in our job. Money is set aside to go on two to three week courses every year. I'm privileged to be a person working in the field for which I have been trained and in the UN system; some weight is attached to what you do."

Lack of support for direct work with refugees

154.   As with national staff, JPOs and particularly UNVs are most often providing the direct face-to-face services with refugees. It seemed that in some places they are seen as an expendable resource, provided with minimal support and, in the case of national UNVs, turned over fairly rapidly. The skills required to work effectively with refugees involve a mix of both technical and more personally oriented professional skills, such as the ability to tolerate high levels of traumatic material, withstanding pressure to meet needs that can't be met without becoming defensive, being able to tolerate frustration, anger and desperation in others, and maintaining a strong sense of personal boundaries in order not to burn out, just to name a few. As Walkup (1997) found, aid workers develop a range of defensive strategies to attempt to maintain some sense of emotional and psychological stability, which impacts on the quality of their work with refugees and influences the development of a defensive organization culture. This occurs particularly in the absence of significant experience, good skill development and ongoing support.

"We have unqualified people stumbling around in the dark… if they've got good in their hearts it's usually seen as good enough."

155.   Workers who listen to repeated reports of trauma, horror, human cruelty and extreme loss can become overwhelmed. They may begin to experience feelings of fear, pain, and suffering similar to those of beneficiaries and to experience similar trauma symptoms, such as intrusive thoughts, nightmares and avoidance, as well as changes in their relationships with the wider community, their colleagues and their families. They may themselves come to need assistance to cope with hearing other's trauma experiences. New and less experienced workers are especially vulnerable, particularly if they have not received adequate relevant education or training and have not received sufficient organizational support. The internal report "Stress, Coping and Burnout" identified this fact in its research with UNHCR, stating that "age is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, younger participants being more likely to be depersonalised and emotionally exhausted." Paying inadequate attention to the impact of secondary, or vicarious, trauma on relief workers not only places their well being at risk, but also compromises the quality of the support and services they provide to the people in their care (McCall 1999).

"She is very disillusioned, and has become hypersensitive to the attitudes and behaviours of those around her. She identifies very strongly with the refugees she deals with, in particular the (ones who remind her of her own experience). It seemed to me that she was struggling with her boundaries and the greater the impact her work is having on her emotionally, the more out of control she appears to be feeling. She said she receives little or no moral support in this regard from the organization apart from talking with her peers. She

indicated that she is concerned about her own mental health. She said she is terrified of people in the organization finding out about her personal experience as she thinks it will negatively affect her potential career with the organization."

156. These problems are by no means unique to JPOs, UNVs, or national staff, however these are three of the most vulnerable groups in the organization due to their lower status and the higher proportion of time that they spend dealing in direct refugee service. The problem of lack of supervision, support and coaching exists throughout the organization, and people often expressed concern regarding the degree of mental health and substance abuse problems, for example, that exist across the board.

Women

> *Hypothesis: That many of the particular needs of women are not taken into account in the structures of the organization, and the overriding predominance of the "fairness" principle sacrifices women's interests and ensures that gender imbalance cannot be solved at more senior levels of the organization.*

157. Gender relations within UNHCR parallel gender issues in the world at large. There are far fewer women in senior positions and parity has only been achieved at more junior levels. The organization struggles to identify and address the factors that get in the way of more women reaching a senior level, replicating the "glass ceiling" that exists in most other organizations. Many staff, both women and men recognised that female staff are often penalised in their careers with UNHCR if they have been out of the organization for a while for family reasons, and that many women choose to leave before reaching a more senior level because of the particular difficulties of satisfactorily balancing family and career in UNHCR.

158. Power imbalances as played out through gender relations also result in an incidence of harassment of more junior female staff. While male staff also experience harassment within the organization according to feedback from the management learning programmes and anecdotal reports from other staff, women are more likely to experience sexual or gender based harassment, and in a reflection of power distribution and relations in general, will experience harassment in higher numbers.

159. Gender issues appear to be acknowledged in the organization and many may intellectually agree with the principles of gender equity. However, as with the surface and deep dimensions of organizational life, there is often a contradiction between stated beliefs and what actually happens.

160. In feedback gained through the Management Learning Programmes, the majority of all participants, both female and male, agreed on an intellectual level with the following statements:

- "In order to advance and survive in UNHCR, women and other minorities have had to adopt a western, male, managerial style to work that fits with the culture"

- "UNHCR, like most organizations, is permeated with male values and assumptions in its structure, culture and practices".

- "UNHCR must continue with special measures for the advancement of women and geographical balance to redress the cumulative effect of many years of discrimination and correct its HR demographic imbalance."

161.   During one on one interviews for this research, however, either one of the two following opinions were quite frequently expressed by male staff members, the first opinion being more common than the second; a) there are no problems or real issues in relation to gender in the organization any more, and b) women have an unfair advantage over men in gaining promotions. Both of these propositions were vigorously disputed by many female staff members, and most often by female international staff at P4 levels and above. Many women pointed out that the statistics do not support the second opinion at all, and there was a feeling that men who are dissatisfied with their own career progression often blame women. Returning to the notion of organizations as founded upon white / northern / heterosexual male values, ideals, and experience, it is reiterated that the behaviour of women, people from cultural minorities and homosexuals, when experienced as "the other", become more noticeable and their impact or effect may be exaggerated in people's minds.

162.   In the MLP data, for the following statements, the majority of female respondents agreed and the majority of male respondents disagreed:

- "Women always have to work harder than men to prove themselves. Women at the 'top' are never as powerful as men in the same position"

- "To make it in UNHCR as a woman, it is best to have no personal commitments or ties."

163.   Following is selection of examples from the research of experience of gender inequity in the organization, as an overview of some of the ways in which women experience gender based disadvantage in UNHCR.

"I asked her about her experience of having had a child and she said that she feels it has been detrimental to her career. She said that because she wasn't around during maternity leave she wasn't able to advocate for her role and position and when she returned, much had changed and she felt it was best to put up with things and not complain. She is now working on what she sees as interesting but unviable projects."

"She talked about different attitudes amongst female colleagues regarding having family and relationships. She said that her mentors, who are older, decided that they couldn't have a long-term relationship, as it would prevent them from developing their career in UNHCR. She said that they got around this problem by having lovers, but never committing to marriage or something long term. This is in great part because women know that they are unlikely to have their men agree to follow them for their career. She said that some women of her own age group have taken the decision to become single mothers. In this way they can have their family

without being hampered by a man not wanting to travel with them and they have to be posted to stations where they can take their children."

"There has been improvement in gender issues. But I don't know how interested people really are."

"Sexual harassment is a serious problem that is not addressed. Particularly for female colleagues who are posted to remote duty stations."

"She was visibly sad as she told me that she wouldn't be able to stay with the organization for much longer as she wasn't prepared to compromise the children she wants to have in the future."

"Many young women said they were worried about whether they would have to become cynical and act like men to make it in the organization."

164. Many women in the organization experience a number of the issues already discussed in this report in specific ways.

Application of the "fairness" principle

165. With the often-repeated phrases of "it wouldn't be fair" and "policies should be applied equally to everyone", it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to voice their needs and their experience of policies that may just not be fair to them as human beings. The overriding predominance of the "fairness" concept means that the problem for women can't be solved. If all people are to be seen as equal and the same, then the particular needs of women with children, for example, are not acknowledged, especially when the baseline for "what is fair" is a reflection of standards that are in fact not neutral.

Competition

166. Competition within the organization means that any attempts to address gender imbalances elicit a backlash against women, who were perceived by some to be gaining an unfair advantage. Staff often felt that the quota system for promoting women had mainly succeeded in alienating women further. Many women expressed concern that their promotions would not be viewed as merit based, which could undermine their authority and credibility. This concern has resulted in a number of women distancing themselves from any discourse on gender, further encouraging an expectation that to make it in the organization, one needs to learn to fit in with the prevailing norms.

"He said that he wasn't happy with the system of quotas for women as he would rather see the organization value and use what women bring to the organization that is different, and to rectify 'what men have failed to do'".

Staff with families

> *Hypothesis: That uncompromising attitudes towards the desire to balance a family and a career in UNHCR represents competition regarding self sacrifice and a defence against some of the difficult emotions stirred up by the work.*

167.   The issue of families is, of course, of concern to both women and men and thus is being discussed in more depth as a separate section. However it is positioned to follow on from and in many ways to continue the discussion of issues that are of particular concern to women.

168.   In the feedback from the MLPs, there was very strong agreement across the board for the following statements:

- "Currently UNHCR obliges women and men to choose between their family/personal life and their careers, rather than offering a real opportunity to balance both."

- "Many UNHCR men with long professional careers have been absent for long periods from their children and/or partners. This has had a serious negative impact on them and their families"

- "There is a close link between organizational effectiveness and enhancing the integration of work and personal life for women and men in UNHCR"

- "UNHCR should promote staff friendly policies, which consider the needs and personal life demands of both women and men in different situations". This statement received 100% agreement from senior management respondents and 94% agreement from middle managers

169.   Despite these results, during the research many people articulated the attitude that if staff wanted to avoid being separated from their children, they should find work elsewhere, thereby conveying the belief that one can't have both, and it is the individual and not the organization that should change.

> "Many women don't want to go higher because of family considerations. Women make those sacrifices"

170.   There is an underlying assumption that for women in particular, either family or career should be sacrificed to fit in with the demands and structures of the organization, rather than a need for the organization to change its practices and structures to meet the needs of its staff. Thinking on this is hampered by the belief that this wouldn't be "fair".

171.   Attitudes regarding family and rotation, for example, were initially formed during a time when men had a higher degree of expectation that their female partners might follow them around the world whilst caring for their children, and there were less non-family duty stations. The fixed nature of the underlying beliefs as to how rotation should operate mean that now the structure of the organization is increasingly likely to only accommodate single people and men who have a partner willing to move frequently and care for their children if they have any. This raises a critical question for UNHCR as to what kind of balance and diversity it really wants

within the organization, as placing such demanding expectations on staff with regard to their personal lives in the name of fairness is likely to "weed out" people with a range of valuable life and professional experiences over time.

> "Many of our female colleagues are handicapped compared with their male colleagues. For example with rotation, still the wife follows the husband more easily than the husband follows the wife. I wouldn't encourage my daughter to work for UNHCR, because later on she will suffer in terms of her private life. This is a very heavy burden and among many women colleagues. We lost a lot of important members of staff; they were excellent and decided to leave."

172. The nature of competition in the organization and the values with regard to "fairness" mean that it is almost taboo within the organization to suggest that it may be even more unreasonable to expect a mother to leave her young children than it would be to expect that of a father. In not addressing this issue fully, both mothers and fathers get around it by using their influence networks to manipulate their postings, particularly during critical times for their children, and bear the consequent envious attacks. A certain number of women appear also to leave as they feel they are being asked to make too damaging a choice for their families or for their own personal futures.

173. During the course of the research it began to appear that the networking method benefited certain classes of staff, and it seems more likely that women from developing countries who were attempting to, for example, upgrade from national to international status, were the ones who would feel the need to make the choice to leave their children over a period of years in order to secure a financial future. Particularly for a single parent, the options of just leaving the organization are reduced when this means losing one's income and ability to support one's children.

> "She is a single mother and when one of her children was two years old she was posted to a non-family duty station. (A relative) moved to look after her children and for around three years she saw her children once every two months. She was then given a new posting after that in a similar situation and only after having to appeal very stringently was she able to secure an alternative post in a family station. As was commented by someone else, the situation was improved only after the damage was done."

174. The pain expressed during interactions such as this one contrasted with the view that a few people expressed regarding different cultural beliefs about child rearing and about mothers leaving their children (the implication being that women from some countries don't have the same attachment to their children). Perhaps the difference that many staff are less likely to see is the degree to which, for some staff, an international salary offers a rare chance for a better life and opportunities that make leaving children necessary to consider. Some staff may be in a position where they don't feel that they have a choice not to, as they are thinking about their children's futures rather than about their present.

175. As mentioned, there is often an evident lack of compassion and understanding for people who want to have both a family and professional life by those who chose

not to. This is an example of splitting and some competition and envy. On one level it appears to be an expression of competition regarding the self-sacrifice discussed earlier. Along with the "fairness" principle, these drivers have contributed to a rotation policy that fails to take into account life cycle and family needs, because, it was stated, this was too hard to administer. The pressure not to administer such an important factor for an large proportion of staff includes an underlying belief that there is a significant group of people being sent from one hard duty station to another as a result of all the selfish and greedy people who are manipulating their networks to stay in comfortable jobs (and particularly in Geneva) to be with their families. There is a punitive edge to this belief, and the solutions imposed, that seeks to ensure that all people must suffer. This is not to suggest that there is not a problem in the organization for a number of staff who seem unable to secure other than D or E posts, nor that there may be a problem with filling D and E posts sufficiently. However, it is being suggested that the underlying assumptions as to cause and effect may be challenged and the solutions developed may be expressing more than a "fair" approach. These uncompromising and harsh attitudes towards the desire to balance a family and a career in UNHCR, as held up against the goal of self-sacrifice, could be interpreted as a way of not knowing about, or defending against, the painful and difficult emotions associated with loss, betrayal and mourning.

> "He was unsympathetic towards the issue of families, saying that he had deliberately decided not to have children and if people want to work for the organization they should do the same or leave."

> "He feels people should know when they join the organization that they are here for the refugees and they shouldn't expect to have a family life or to worry about their career. He thinks that a lot of the problems stem from the new generation of staff expecting too much out of their jobs."

176. There was much mention of the belief that UNHCR has the highest divorce rate of all UN agencies. Many who had partners and families experience considerable anxiety and despair regarding the impact of the work on them. In the face of such unforgiving attitudes towards the attempt to combine family and career, this may make it very difficult to seek and receive the support that many people may need.

> "Family life is quite tough. Of 12 couples (I first knew in) HQ (from the same country as myself), only two survived"

> "You have to be settled and have peace of mind (with regard to your family) before you can think of other people."

> "He expressed his reluctance to sacrifice his family for the organization. He repeated the belief that HCR has the highest divorce rate in the UN system. He said that people get used to being apart from their families, but in the end it eats you from the inside, and it's not worth it. He feels that people shouldn't have to rotate to difficult duty stations when they get older; that the organization should use its younger staff for that while they have the enthusiasm and energy."

177.   There are many reasons why people are highly motivated to stay with UNHCR despite the obstacles it places in the way of a personal life, and these obstacles cannot be effectively discounted by a simple response of "leave if you want a family". As discussed above, for many staff the pay is at a level they would not find easily elsewhere, and offers their family opportunities they would not otherwise be able to contemplate. Many staff have persisted over years in the hope of a more secure position within the organization and feel reluctant to dismiss that commitment and start all over somewhere else. Many staff find such a degree of fulfilment through the nature of the work and the mandate of the organization that they cannot imagine working anywhere else. And some staff simply would not find it easy to secure a position somewhere else, due to a range of factors, including mediocre performance and skill levels.

Organization structure, practices and policy

Long term planning, reflection and crisis mode

> *Hypothesis: That the organization is drawn to a crisis mode of operation, avoiding reflection and long term planning.*

> "We're CNNish. We respond; we don't do long term strategic planning."

178. UNHCR comprises an uncomfortable mix of two seemingly opposite and incongruent styles of operation. On the one hand it is drawn on many levels to crisis and short term modes of operation that lead to a lack of effective reflection and long term planning. On the other hand, the organization has developed a bureaucratic style of operation that is in part a result of the organization engaged in the alternative primary task of self-perpetuation and "organization", as is discussed further below.

179. Many people are concerned by the lack of reflection and long term planning undertaken by the organization. There has been much written about the impact of the precariousness of donor funding on the motivation of humanitarian organizations to evaluate and question their outcomes and practices, lest negative findings lead to a drop in resources. UNHCR has a high profile evaluation unit that maintains a determined policy of transparency and access with regard to findings. A number of people commented, however, that even the reports from this unit don't seem to "go anywhere", in that they seem to have little impact, are not taken up by the rest of the organization, nor do they result in sufficient concrete debate, reflection or outcomes. This problem is repeated in relation to many organizational reviews and reports, as mentioned earlier.

180. Many people made the connection between the attraction to working crisis and emergency mode and avoidance of thinking and planning.

> "We have a culture of stress. If you are a quiet person who reflects and doesn't react immediately, then you will be considered not a good staff member. We're dealing with humans who need assistance; this is why we have a spirit that everything is urgent, we have to try to resolve it"

> "It all boils down to the issue of intellectual curiosity. Nobody's interested, people expect us to be doers rather than thinkers. People would rather tinker than change. We have a two year cycle; the same complaints and then we go back to square one."

181. Avoidance of planning, reflection and review allows relief from some of the more confronting difficulties of the work. People can maintain a sense of the worth of what they are doing when the role is clear, the need is clear and the pace is fast. This aspect of the work attracts many people who like and are suited to operating in this way, who can think and react effectively in an emergency. However, much of the

work of the organization is post crisis and administrative, grinds on in long term frustration and is immersed in the slow, relentlessness of human misery. There is a risk that the power and thrill experienced through operating in emergency situations becomes an end in itself, and people seek to meet their own internal needs at the expense of those they are there to help or at the expense of the work that still needs to be done.

> "He finds his current role a bit boring. He doesn't like the fact that they don't have four-wheel drives and radios, indicating that there is not much happening in the area. He'd rather be closer to an emergency situation."

> "These operations were really big and high profile a few years ago and now they are winding down and this seems to leave a lot of staff with a deflated and disappointed feeling, as though they are no longer important."

> "Many staff are wondering what to do; they came here for a different kind of job. You find officers dealing with distributing "Pampers" when they are used to doing more emergency work"

182. The structure of rotation inevitably also undermines long-term thinking and follow through, allowing people to avoid it by moving on and seeking a new challenge. New people coming at senior levels bring new approaches and change that often are experienced as disruptive and without clear purpose.

> "We're almost always in fire fighting mode, our thinking is not long term. Programmes lose continuity and there are no mechanisms to control this. When the Rep and the programme officer change there can be a 360 degree turnaround. Then another change will occur the next time."

183. Thus at both local and organization wide levels there can be a sense of random activity, of change for the sake of it, but little persistence to see the changes through before things are changed again. As one senior manager commented, pointing to the need for sufficient time to elapse before any real change can become embedded;

> "Let's go slow on changes. Once a change is introduced, we need to keep it as we've planned it. It takes time to absorb the change."

184. Ironically, the consistency or predictability of frequent changes overlaying previous initiatives gives a sense that while much constantly changes, overall, it can tend in some ways to stay the same, thus pointing to a dimension of the organization's culture.

> "We are working like in an emergency. Lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part. We're running on our tails because of lack of planning at HQ."

> "Things change because they change. Changes that are not necessary, not planned. They don't take the time to look at what is important. This happens a lot in UNHCR, no analysis behind of why. Because it's a new person who has a new idea."

185. Lack of planning and reflection, fear of critiques that might affect funding and a desire to remain in a fast pace of work contribute to a reduction of the ability of an organization to learn from its experience. This problem has been identified as consistent across the humanitarian aid industry.

> "We talk about sustainability, but no one talks about it after six months. What happens to the returnees after time? People can't live off two plum trees and a cow these days."

> "The organization is good at promoting professional development, but not the lessons learnt. Exchange of information between best practices in different operations. There is not a history of information shared around, let alone recent information about what has worked; there's no room for that."

Organizational bureaucracy and slowness

> *Hypothesis: That the bureaucratic nature of UNHCR is a reflection of the organization engaged in an "as if" task of self-perpetuation, and is impeding its ability to adapt rapidly enough to the current environment of competition for funding and increased expectations for accountability.*

186. Many people spoke about the "bureaucratic" feel of the organization, implying that it was large, cumbersome, slow to respond and unnecessarily complicated in its processes. Rapid change and increased competition in organizational environments means that the large bureaucratic structures of older style organizations are no longer adaptive. In a less competitive environment, bureaucratic approaches were more effective in containing and absorbing, to a certain extent, the impact of many of the organizational defenses discussed in this report. Now the higher degree of competition, along with increased expectations for reporting and accountability, mean that organizations are required to adapt at a much higher speed, leaving far less margin for error and placing bureaucratic organizations at greater risk.

> "What's needed to be efficient, our culture doesn't allow us to do that. It's a big part of the UN; it's a contradiction to say we can be efficient."

187. Many people felt that UNHCR has been slow to respond to a changed environment where funding is increasingly difficult to secure and competition for the same funds has grown. A shared and sustained belief about the organization's unquestioned position in the field has seen it struggle with the new environment, creating problems where practices and the nature and expectations of funding are to some extent mismatched.

> "He spoke a number of times about how long it takes to get a new post created and questioned the notion of UNHCR being able to respond rapidly even in an emergency situation. The response is always too slow; even if the people get there rapidly, the resources take much longer and by the time they arrive, often the emergency is over."

> "The bureaucracy is just really heavy to deal with. I don't think people are well motivated; people say 'we've always been doing it like that!'"

> "Probably because of the centralised system of the organization, for a simple question it takes months to get a response."

188. Tied in with the problem of lack of long term planning and thinking, the bureaucratic structure of the organization seems to be an unquestioned assumption, something evolved out of a rapidly burgeoning organization in the 1990s and of being part of the UN system.

Electronic communication

189. A common frustration that many UNHCR staff expressed was the number of people "cc-ed" into e-mails. This has the effect of slowing down work pace and productivity through such a high volume of e-mail and the value of so many people needing to know about, at times, relatively unimportant matters is questionable. This practice represents any number of underlying communications, with both productive and less productive motivations. Such practices may represent, for example: a wish for more senior people to see a person's work, to impress them, to subtly lobby for a new posting; a fear of being held accountable for some event or action, thereby ensuring that if a copy of an e-mail is in a more senior person's inbox, this implicitly places them responsible; or an attempt to include people and reinforce a sense of team.

> "You send an email and when the reply comes people have copied it everywhere"

> "The changes are communicated very badly, you lose the train. We try to understand everything and continue, but it's a difficulty. It becomes hard to prioritise. I don't have time to read all the e-mails that come."

Funding

190. This report has suggested that distribution of resources within the organization is somewhat related to the "as if" primary task of self perpetuation and of becoming "organised". It is also a reflection of current political and economic contexts. Donors provide funding earmarked for operations within countries with particularly high currency. This funding may not equitably reflect need, but ensures the replication of world attention, reducing the ability of UNHCR to make its own informed and impartial assessment of need. The mandate of UNHCR is often broader than the available resources, and the needs of the refugees and requests of the international community may stretch beyond the capacity of UNHCR, and may not always seem complementary, adding to the stresses and complexities of the primary task. The nature of the environment is in flux, highly political, complex and rapidly changing, while factors such as the bureaucratic mode of operation and the culture of the organization impede its ability to keep pace.

> "We need to be better team players, to develop a better relationship
> with the donors. We need to change rather than just expecting them
> to. Earmarking by donors is a sign of their lack of confidence in us.
> The ball is in our court."

191. Many people feel that the organization has been slow to respond to a changed environment where funding is increasingly difficult to secure and competition for the same funds has grown. A shared and sustained belief about the organization's unquestioned position in the field has created new problems where practices and the nature and expectations of funding are to some extent mismatched.

Funding system and impact on relationship with donors

192. There were some varying opinions as to the relative merits of the current system for obtaining funding. While some people thought it was a way of keeping the organization from becoming too complacent, most people who talked about funding were concerned about the constant stress that the insecurity of funding places upon the organization and the impact it has upon the work. People feel that UNHCR is too subject to the policies and desires of donors, and this seems to colour relationships with donors in a number of ways, such as building resentment towards them, encouraging a lack of direct openness in reporting, and allowing donors significant power to dictate the work of UNHCR, regardless of how well priorities are matched with on the ground knowledge.

> "Having to chase after our funding keeps us dynamic and evolving
> and makes us special as compared with other UN organizations. We
> have to compete and renew ourselves."

> "A weakness is having to chase after donor money and get directed
> into things we shouldn't."

> "Now governments dictate what they want, for example we were
> asked to be working with IDPS, instructed by the international
> community. How do we ensure funds are equally divided? Funds
> are earmarked, a lot of decisions are made already."

> "The lies we have to tell, the changing of our jobs because of lack of
> freedom. We're not as free to concentrate on more important things.
> The more we have our own budget, the better we are."

The way the funds are managed

193. This current system then has the effect of undermining the ability of the organization to manage its funds effectively, and therefore undermines the authority of senior managers. Accountability is affected at every level, as there is little sense of a global overview and responsibility for the budget, rather it seems that everyone, from the donors down to managers, are concerned just about their particular piece of the puzzle. In addition, distribution is also affected by the cultural and dynamics issues discussed in this report.

> "Governments decided UNHCR should have a fixed budget. Less flexibility is given to us in how to manage those funds. There is a perception that there is no authority, that the SMC is fighting."

> "You can make an analogy between the UN and communism. We get funds from the donors and they're being managed by us collectively. We think these resources could be managed more effectively. The overall accountability issue is a concern here, monitoring should be improved."

194. It should be noted that at the time of the final drafting of this report, a new system of resource allocation is being considered that would allow much greater local autonomy and control over local budgets. If implemented well, this system may well have a highly positive effect on perceptions of autonomy and decision making, providing it does not become a new method for shifting "blame" downwards.

Lack of resources and impact on the work with refugees

195. Ultimately, the seeming chaos and arbitrariness of the current system impacts most severely in the field, where field staff find themselves constantly cutting and adjusting their practices and operations to fit the changing budgetary picture being communicated from HQ. This affects not only field offices, but their relationships with implementing partners who are also very much subject to these financial changes. The unpredictability of funding and the likelihood that further cuts will continually be announced adds to the feeling of disenfranchisement and disconnection between the field and HQ and adds to a heightened sense of frustration at the already limited funding and resources available.

> "Whatever you do you can't assist the beneficiaries. There's not enough funds ever."

> "With constant cuts during the year it creates confusion with Ips. They can't count on our funding. Every year we have the same problem, we never learn how to work it better. This gives problems and stress to staff and then we have to go to the IPs and beneficiaries. It gives us a bad reputation, uncertainty for staff on their employment"

> "How do you balance the needs of refugees when pushed around by budget cuts of donors?"

Accountability and managing good and poor performance

Hypothesis: That the organization avoids problems of accountability and poor performance, and along with lack of mechanisms to reward good performance, undermines its potential.

196. A common topic of discussion was the perception of a lack of accountability in UNHCR. This issue is expressed in a number of ways, the main ones being that people feel decisions don't get made (as discussed earlier), poor performance is not

managed and the corollary of this last point is that good performance is also not acknowledged directly or consistently.

197. Despite the current accountability structures, many people feel that there is nowhere to complain or receive support unless a person is engaged in clearly negligent behaviour. This means that ongoing negative or even somewhat abusive behaviour towards staff, or incompetence, for example, is tolerated in the hope that rotation will solve the problem. This has the effect of dampening morale, suppressing performance further and ultimately passing the problem on to someone else. The PAR may have been an attempt to address this problem but has failed to date, as is discussed further below. Perhaps one way that the organization deals with poor performance is to stall careers, through lack of promotion or posting. The problem with such an indirect approach is that people become bitter and disillusioned, communicating in a negative way and developing conspiracy and nepotism theories. Another problem is that not only poor performers become SIBAs, and as many people perceive SIBA status as a "kiss of death", the message is punitive and unclear.

> "At the end of the day staff are protected, almost to the organization's detriment because we can't get rid of criminals."

> "Most incidents are not reported. Staff wait for them to leave; very few cases go to the OIG or HR mechanisms."

198. Contrary to the widely held belief that incidents rarely get reported to the Inspector General's Office, it seems that in recent times this trend is shifting, although it is likely to take some time before the effect registers organization wide. One obstacle to the shift in this aspect of culture is a fear that reporting incidents will not be held in confidence. A few staff told stories of confidentiality breaches that appear to have gained considerable credence and have spread widely.

> "Others are concerned about the number of complaints. They interpret it as a deterioration of the health of the organization. But I see it as positive; a sign that people feel confident to report things now."

199. Previous and current recruitment and promotion practices add to the problems of poor performance. A number of people felt that the primary cause of many of the problems in the organization is the indefinite contract. It was suggested that indefinite contracts "destroyed the discipline of the organization", reduced UNHCR's competitive edge in the international field and played a big part in allowing nepotism to flourish. People talked about the legacies of more nepotistic recruitment in the past that have yet to pass through over time, including the notion of poor performers recruiting more poor performers. Promotion that often occurs on the basis of longevity rather than merit shows a disregard for the importance of skill and talent in leadership roles.

> If people are on an indefinite contract, they're untouchable unless you sleep with a refugee and steal and get caught"

> "Known under-performers carry on because the organization is not courageous enough. You don't dismiss people for under performing and seniority is still the main criteria for promotion."

200.   Reluctance or inability to deal with performance effectively means that many people feel that where teams are performing well it is more to do with luck that good planning and management, and this luck is transient with the rotation of people.

> "We're fortunate (that our region is) delivering. It's a portion of time frozen where things are good and it's not in my control. The reputation of the organization is at stake; isolated problems can bring the thing down. The organization performs because of the quality and commitment of a few and a great dose of luck."

> "Because of problems with performance, the whole fabric of the organization is coming to pieces. It all depends on personality and the team leader and teams change so often."

201.   Despite this concern, there does seem to be a large proportion of good and excellent performers within the organization. In part, current cultures around recruitment assist in this, as more junior international staff have to perform well, firstly to get into the organization, and then to stay. There is a risk, however, that even good performers may be undermined when placed in a variety of roles, some of which may not suit their skills and thus increasing the chances that even potentially good performers may fail. Connections between performance, organizational environment and psychological and physical health is made well in the following comment:

> "How do you make sure staff are in good health to perform. Sometimes we don't ask ourselves why staff don't perform well, sometimes we just blame staff and don't care what environment they're working in."

Good Performance

202.   Tied up in the notions of "fairness", treating everyone equally and competition, as stated above, there is an inability or reluctance to reward good performance. This has an effect of potentially suppressing outstanding performance by reducing the motivators for extending it. The combination of not rewarding good performance and not managing poor performance seems, along with other factors, to encourage mediocrity in an organization that would like to think of itself as exceptional, and which has such enormous potential.

> "There seems to be a culture of impunity. There are no rewards for excelling at one's job, the PAR doesn't promote or motivate one to excel within one's area of expertise."

> "The organization is not geared towards rewarding performance, hasn't been able to manage poor performance. It's more dramatic when dealing with human lives."

203. Again, this issue was discussed at length in the 2000 report, "The State of UNHCR's Staff".

> "UNHCR has made much of the fact that it is a performance oriented organization and that UNHCR staff constantly strive for excellence. Yet, one of the main sources of dissatisfaction amongst staff is the (lack of) ways in which they are rewarded."

204. The report identified decreasing opportunities for reward via vertical career moves, "stagnation at managerial levels, and a re-enforced concrete ceiling for more junior staff members", and recommended that there needed to be alternative methods to reward good performance and to encourage high achievers. It commented that "relying primarily on seniority criteria for promotion contradicts the philosophy of performance orientation", however it seems that this is still the case four years later.

PAR

> *Hypothesis: That the PAR system is avoided and sabotaged widely across the organization, in part because it highlights a number of the problems in interpersonal dynamics and with authority within the organization*

205. The general level of dissatisfaction with the performance appraisal system indicates a failure of the programme to have sufficiently anticipated or addressed the elements of organizational culture that present resistance. Analysis of feedback regarding the performance appraisal system from participants in the Management Learning Programmes provides some good examples of cultural elements that have hampered the effective implementation of the system. Following are some of the key points that emerged from the MLP feedback:

- The process is still not considered to be transparent or fair enough and it seems to be affected by a series of factors such as the personal relationship of the supervisor and the supervisee, the tendency to avoid giving a lower rating than the one given by the past supervisor (or by the same supervisor but on the previous year), or lack of objectivity.

- Different supervisors have different yardsticks with which to assign grades. Not everyone uses the same criteria for assigning a grade, and this is seen to make the process subjective.

- The fact that international staff are constantly rotating from one location to another makes it very difficult to complete a process of the length of this one.

- The lack of credibility given to the process is believed to originate in the attitudes of senior management. Many comments were made regarding this point: senior managers are seen to believe that the process is not really necessary, don't take it seriously and often don't have their objectives established on time, or the appraisals of their supervisees. This holds up the process down the reporting line, and these attitudes are seen to also flow down, affecting everyone's commitment to the process. If senior managers

do not give the necessary support to the process, it is very difficult to institutionalise it in the organization.

- People often commented that they would like to receive more feedback during the whole period, and not only at the last moment when the meeting has to be held because it was compulsory.

- There is sometimes pressure "from above" to give certain people a certain rating, especially when these people are "favourites". Some people claimed they have been made to change the evaluation they made of some of their staff.

- MMLP participants made it clear that they like to receive feedback, and they are aware of the need to give feedback to their staff too.

206. The failure of the PAR represents an aspect of the struggle with authority and trust in the organization and relates to the discussion of organizational defences. There is a challenge to the authority of managers to give their staff feedback, managers fear being attacked for being honest, staff fear being attacked unfairly by their managers and lack trust that managers will rate them fairly and without agenda. The fact that in many cases the direct line supervisor is the only person giving the feedback is seen as unfair and biased, and leaves people feeling vulnerable to the nature of that relationship.

"The PAR is held over people's heads like a club; we're better off without it. We know people are lying. Get rid of it, it proves nothing"

"The real courage is to sit across the table from each other."

"The policy of promotion and CMS is very strange. After you've been through so much with the organization, your supervisor can kill your career through the CMS. it's wrong that when they need to make a decision they go back to the CMS; that's wrong because it's so subjective."

207. There are a number of practices regarding the rating system that result in generally inaccurate ratings, or the perception of inaccurate ratings. Many people also said that they don't rate people honestly as they fear the process of giving critical feedback and are anxious about having their ratings disputed. There are a great many myths about what will happen to managers if they have to defend their ratings in front of a board. There is some indication that these myths may be generally unfounded, however their power is such that people expressed considerable reluctance to test out their veracity.

"The rebuttal board is long and contentious, a lot of work. Managers are in a position of power, they have access to recourse; only a few cases are won by staff."

"The PAR is quite deficient. For many years managers have inflated ratings of the performance of staff; people expect an outstanding rating. There are both cultural and personal attitudes towards

ratings. If staff have been used to being rated in excess, there is no incentive for managers to be consistent in their ratings. There are no sanctions attached to the PAR. You may not get a promotion if you get a bad rating, but you won't get the sack."

208. Many people commented how difficult it is to follow through with the complete process due rotation, and related to this, the difficulty in following through on managing poor performance when people don't work together long enough to address performance issues over time. Such obstacles reduce the determination of people to attempt to follow through with the process effectively. This is both a result of culture and contributes to it, when such factors as performance are not dealt with effectively.

209. The use of such a flawed and not universally supported system in the decision making process regarding people's careers and postings is a source of considerable concern. While many people agree with the idea of performance evaluation, factors such as the lack of role modelling by senior managers and the entrenched problems within the current model, including the fact that it taps so directly into many of the most deeply held interpersonal anxieties within the organization, make the existing system unworkable.

"I had a PAR via email. Senior management don't take it seriously"

"The evaluation is no incentive to do well; it's your personal desire to do well or the encouragement of your supervisor"

210. Draft guidelines to strengthen and improve the use of the PAR are nearing completion at the time of writing the final version of this report. In general the sentiments of the guidelines are positive and could serve to tighten the use of the tool. The process engaged in rolling out the guidelines will be critical in their success as will be the attention to the development of skills and confidence of the people responsible for conducting the PAR. As one senior manager said;

"It's not the tool, it's the forces that govern the use of the tool."

211. And, it could be added, it is also the way in which the tool is interpreted and implemented by the people responsible.

Staff support

Needs/psychological impact of the work

Hypothesis: That the organization fails to adequately meet the support and welfare needs of its staff through managerial, psychological, staff development and organizational support mechanisms.

212. Organization culture has a role in determining values about the approach to work and how stress might be managed within that organization. A number of research studies have found that workplace design and dynamics (such as interactions and the nature of relationships) to be more important than personal coping mechanisms in determining health or ill health. The methods that workers

use to cope with their own stress are influenced and shaped by what happens between people and the experiences that they share within particular organizational contexts. These processes occur predominantly outside conscious awareness, where people unwittingly join together in reproducing social structures and interactions that may be experienced as distressing. These structures also often mirror social and political power structures in the wider society. Many examples in UNHCR have already been discussed.

213. Research within the humanitarian aid field has found that both exposure to traumatic events and organizational and interpersonal issues were among the greatest sources of stress for workers (Bierens de Haan 2002; Macnair 1995). A study entitled "Stress, Coping and Burnout" was conducted within UNHCR by the University of Bristol in 2001 / 2002. In line with similar research elsewhere in the humanitarian field, they found that the major source of stress and burnout in UNHCR was systemic in nature, with the factors reported to cause the most stress being work overload and lack of resources. They suggested that while critical incident stress as a result of difficult or dangerous field postings had been addressed by the organization to some extent, it was important to recognise that high levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout were being reported throughout a range of duty stations, including HQ, and not just those in hazardous locations.

214. Workload and lack of resources also came up anecdotally as significant sources of stress in this research. Some staff commented that people are expected to complete unrealistic workloads and feel that they have to keep working until the work is completed. This is compounded in the field by the number of posts being cut and the consequent increase in workload for those remaining.

215. During the course of the field visits for this research, field offices were offered workshops on workplace stress. Below are the combined responses from two separate staff teams to the question of, "what are the sources of stress related to your work here?" Responses were grouped into four separate categories as outlined below. Most issues raised have been discussed in various sections of this report already. What is noticeable in the listing of them here is the size of the list of organizational stressors as compared with the others. This weighting was consistent with both groups, and both groups listed many of the same factors.

216. Sources of stress in the UNHCR workplace:

Environmental

- Political environment

- Magnitude of decisions and their implications

- Demands and expectations of refugees – unrealistic, can't meet expectations, solutions are different to what they might want, can't cover basic needs

- Security issues, eg. Danger, minefields, life can be on the line at times, danger from role, past and present experiences of trauma

- Threat of natural disasters, eg earthquakes

Organizational

- Feel that the organization doesn't reciprocate the sense of commitment

- Meetings – many and often unstructured

- Dwindling resources, both human and money, can't fulfil mandate, can't provide the assistance that the refugees need

- Rotation policy, impact on both international and national staff

- Lack of transparency in the organization

- Lack of accountability, lack of management of unacceptable behaviour

- Increased workload with less staff, no training for new roles when colleagues leave

- Relationship with HQ – feel abandoned by them at times, distance between HQ and Branch Office

- No impact if staff speak up, not confident to share concerns with senior management

- E-mail – volume and amount of info, not regulated or brief anymore

- Managerial styles – more control, development, monitoring needed

- Leadership and decision making

- Post cuts and insecurity of tenure for nationals, and threat of becoming a SIBA for international

- Conflict between the fast pace / high adrenalin nature of the work and the slow bureaucracy behind it

- The organization losing sight of the mandate

- No culture of constructive feedback in the organization

- PAR, no follow through

- Lack of orientation to roles and to the organization

- Division of tasks and responsibilities

- No help with balancing the emotional impact of the work with the professional role, no debriefings

- Differentiation between categories of staff – class system

- Efficacy of the staff council

Social and interpersonal

- Conflict between staff, mobbing and scapegoating

- Less time for family, can't meet family's needs

- Less time to form relationships and to build a family

- Living away from family and their resentment

- Impact of psychological problems of colleagues

- School problems

- E-mail replacing verbal communication, less socializing

Personal

- Feel guilt from many of the issues above – can't meet anyone's needs adequately

- Can't complete the work

- Inability to actually help, the impossibility of the task

- Coping strategies, such as building up defences or feeling too open and exposed to the problems of others can contribute to stress

- Discrepancies between salaries and the destitution of others

217. It is not within the scope of this report to do full justice to the examination of the stressors and psychological impact of the work of UNHCR upon its staff. This is a significant and specialised subject and deserves more emphasis and analysis that can be given to it here. Nonetheless, some of the themes that emerged in individual interviews are discussed below.

218. Participants in the research referred to a number of different ways in which direct work with refugees impacted upon them. The guilt of having more than the people they were working with, feeling overwhelmed and losing a sense of the boundaries between the personal and professional self, the difficulty of tolerating stories of trauma and dealing with the emotions that these bring up, and, for example:

"I had a trial by fire. I was just thrown into it. Not given psychological training, how to deal with trauma and stress or violence. We can have three incidents a day; it becomes normalised and a sense of emotional distance is created. I try to keep it in check and not become jaded. It can be difficult dealing with people with high expectations with a lot to lose."

"She used to feel very overwhelmed by her experience of the demands of refugees and said that she felt quite paranoid for a while about being approached outside the office. She said her supervisor

and another person spoke to her about her stress and this was
helpful, but also in the main she had to learn herself how to handle
it."

219. Some people noticed changes in themselves, both psychologically and
physically, that were of some concern. One person also talked about the
psychological impact that knowledge of an incident had had on his young child, who
required medical treatment as a result.

> "What you lose psychologically and with your health can't be
> compensated; maybe problems will come later. I know colleagues
> who went mad. They couldn't find mechanisms to manage their
> stress."

> "Abnormal things become normal. We need support to keep things
> in perspective"

> "I talk in my sleep about work. I can't sleep, sometimes I wake at 3.00
> am, and sometimes I get up and come into the (field) office to finish
> the work. I don't let it out and it affects my nerves."

220. Isolation in the field and lack of social support networks in any type of posting
is clearly a significant factor, both for staff and for the organization in addressing the
problem of finding enough people able and willing to take postings in more remote
stations. A demonstrated connection between the positive perception of social
support and a reduction in adverse responses to trauma highlights the need for
humanitarian organizations to consider their role in situations where workers are
removed from their usual support networks over a period of time. At the same time,
as mentioned previously, the anxiety elicited in situations of external stress and risk
may cause workers to heighten their expectations of their organizations and
colleagues to a potentially unachievable level, thereby intensifying disappointment,
frustration and stress over the organization's inevitable failure to meet their
expectations.

> "It's a big issue being in non-family duty stations, not being safe,
> without family, no facilities."

> "We organised parties among the wider community to socialise. It
> helped us a lot; those who didn't go suffered. You're spending time
> in only two places, working and living, so you become mad, you
> work sometimes 20 hours or eat or drink a lot."

> "Simple isolation. UNHCR has made an effort to get people out but it
> puts a strain on offices because people are leaving frequently and it
> isn't always easy"

221. The stressors inherent in lack of resources, reduced funding and in operations
that are scaling down have been discussed elsewhere, but the significance of their
impact cannot be under emphasised.

> "UNHCR is phasing out here. Even though there is a need, they're
> bound by the budget. It's an extra stress for people in this role
> because of our interface with the refugees."

222. Many people expressed feeling under prepared for a number of their roles prior to postings. A focus on more technical issues in training ignores the importance of people related skills, of management of psychological experience, both in others and in the self, of the demands of leadership, to cultural nuances, etc. Staff training is one of the common items cut when financial restraints increase, giving the impression that training and development is seen as a non-essential luxury.

> "Training isn't given much importance in the organization and as a result, people often go out on mission with very little preparation."

> "DHRM needs a training budget that isn't touched; which requires a mentality change in the house. Learning has to be constant and guaranteed."

223. The means by which the organization addresses the support needs of staff is variable and, for some, inadequate. Given the individual nature of the experience and expression of stress, no single solutions are able to meet the needs of all, even if the stress derives from similar sources. Many people expressed not needing or wanting anything more from the organization, while others would like greater access to support than they perceived that they currently had. Data collected as to the health status of UNHCR workers provides more evidence as to the impact of the work environment on staff, expressed through both psychological and physical illness. As discussed, stress levels may well be higher in HQ than in the field, supporting the theory that organizational stress has an even greater impact, and that the less protected, less contained and less intimate nature of HQ may render people more vulnerable to its effects.

> "We have many good schemes for people to make a balance of hardship duty stations; the MARS, VARI, education, travel, but we don't have a working environment to make use of them without feeling guilty because we're so short staffed."

Staff welfare

224. Staff welfare is acknowledged at a senior level as one of the most significant gaps in DHRM.

225. Staffing numbers in the Staff Welfare Team (SWT) were increased a few years ago in response to the recommendations of the 2000 report on staff security, however given the potential and the importance of the role of this team, and in the light of many of the findings of this research, the team could still be considered as somewhat under resourced. UNHCR is certainly not unique in funding a small staff welfare service in comparison to the size of the workforce and the nature of the work; resources for the range of services required to support staff adequately in the highly demanding context of humanitarian work are generally thought to be limited and even inadequate across the industry.

226. When viewed in the context of cultural factors common across the humanitarian aid sector, some clues may be gained as to the sources of reluctance to devote more than rather token resources to the availability of psychological support for the more than 6,000 staff members of UNHCR. For example, the emergency

nature of much of the work requires and attracts a high proportion of self-sufficient staff whose very qualities that suit them to this type of work also render them less likely to want to seek help or to tolerate their own vulnerability. It is not being suggested that everyone "needs" psychological help even if they won't admit it, however, the peer pressure that emerges through such attitudes becomes preventative for some to feel able to admit that receiving some support would be of assistance.

> "He struck me as somewhat cynical about the need for staff support and said that 20 years ago they didn't have any support after emergencies and they all just got on with it and managed."

> "In the area of psychosocial support, we're not absent here but others are more ahead of the curve. Are we more than other organizations distanced from our own feelings?"

227. The data from the research revealed some discrepancy between perceptions amongst many staff of the roles of the SWT and the actual roles they perform. In essence, many people seemed mainly only aware of the counselling and debriefing roles of the team, and some were not aware of their eligibility to access these services. The team in fact takes on a much broader role, including broader, more systemic interventions. Such level of intervention is essential in tackling workplace stress and in working towards the creation of an environment that supports a positive organization climate and morale on a broader level. According to numerous orgasnisational research findings, systemic or organization level interventions are likely to have far greater impact than individual interventions. While there must be an availability of individual support options, it is therefore critical that the SWT have the opportunity and resources to apply their expertise on a range of levels in the service of their objectives.

228. There are also a number of other routes the organization can take to aim to prevent stress reaching detrimental levels. As mentioned elsewhere, ensuring the skills to manage the nature and demands of the work, and the ability of managers to provide ongoing support on a day-to-day basis are vital to the health of the organization. In addition, addressing the sources of stress at their origins, wherever possible, clearly makes sense, including tackling, on whatever level possible, the nature of the dynamics as described in detail throughout this report.

> "The organization as a whole provides basic things but whether staff members benefit from existing services and from the working environment depends on local managers"

> "There are a lot of people with good will. They need more support to reach out to people in the field and contact people."

> "The situation in the world is changing. It has to change the way we offer support. We're behind in that; it takes a while to get this big organization moving"

SIBAs

Hypothesis: That SIBA status represents split in the organization, where much of what is regarded as bad or dysfunctional in the organization is located, creating a stigma for those who fail to be posted and creating a potentially paralysing anxiety for the rest of the staff at each posting round.

229. As is well known, the rapid expansion in the 1990s as a result of bringing in many staff in response to a number of large-scale crises created a strain on the organization's operational capacity and staff support functions. Absorption of such a large number of international staff on indefinite contracts has contributed to the current crisis of so many staff in between assignments. The current situation for SIBAs seems very demoralising for those in this category, and others view the prospect of becoming a SIBA with great fear. As raised elsewhere, there is a stigma attached to being a SIBA that is difficult to shake regardless of the merits of the individual. So much so that some staff are taking the decision to take leave without pay rather than have SIBA status on their record.

230. The current practice of attempting to encourage managers to employ SIBAs also seems to be having an opposite effect. A number of managers expressed resentment at not being able to choose candidates they wanted for posts and then being presented with a list of SIBAs to choose from. Regardless of conscious understandings that anyone might be made a SIBA for reasons that have nothing to do with their competence, there are still underlying beliefs that SIBAs may have somehow brought this status upon themselves.

> "He said that if you get a bad reputation in the organization it is very hard to shake. And then he also said that if you work very hard and well, you should never become a SIBA, which seemed to confirm some of the prejudices about SIBAs – as though it's their fault."

231. As mentioned already, SIBA status represents another split in the organization, a place where much of what is regarded as bad or dysfunctional in the organization can be located. This in part serves to reassure those who are not SIBAs that in reality they may be safe from being split off and rejected themselves.

> "It is a dereliction of responsibility. If they were no good, they should have been managed out. It's an egregious waste of life; what does it say about accountability?"

> "His experience of having been a SIBA for several months seemed to be very significant. His conversation often seemed to drift back to comparing himself with others in terms of who was appointed to what position. He came across as quite frustrated, hurt and competitive in that regard, which I thought was understandable given the length of time he'd been without a formal role in the organization and how demoralising that seems to be."

Rotation policy as a reflection of many of the dynamics

Hypothesis: That the rotation policy as it is currently structured and implemented serves an aspect of the "as if" primary task of the organization,

that is, to remain preoccupied with the organising of the organization and to distract from achievement of the stated primary task.

232. The rotation of international staff is one of the most significant policies in the organization in terms of its capacity to reflect organizational culture and dynamics, and of its influence on what happens in the organization. It is not my intention here to present a thorough analysis of the policy along with clear recommendations for change, but to discuss a number of the issues in relation to culture and experience in the organization that emerged through the research that may assist in reflecting upon the design and implementation of the policy in the future.

233. On many levels, both conscious and unconscious, there are a number of constructive and positive motivations and ideas behind the policy. It seems that there is:

- A desire to "share the burden" of difficult and hardship postings,

- To share knowledge, skills and expertise around the organization,

- To dilute the potential toxicity of the atmosphere in HQ by bringing in people from the field,

- To give staff a broad knowledge and understanding of the organization,

- To provide a means for staff development and career progression,

- To allow for renewal and regeneration, and

- To create flexibility and movement that allows the organization to deploy resources where they are needed most.

234. Aside from the positive drivers behind the policy, and some of the positive outcomes that derive from these, there are many unintended side effects of the policy that have an enormous impact on the organization and many of its staff, either because of the policy itself, or due to the way it is implemented. The way in which the policy interacts with other aspects of culture, such as unquestioned assumptions, has a significant influence on whether or not it is achieving its ultimate aims, and whether there are more negative outcomes than positive. In addition, the policy itself serves many purposes in support of the organizational defences described in this report.

Achievement of the positive aims

235. The notion of "sharing the burden" assumes that postings are experienced as equally easy or difficult by all staff, which didn't seem to be the case. Some staff commented that remote duty stations are less remote to those who come from neighbouring countries and their ability to get home more frequently significantly alters the experience of being posted there. Other staff alluded to the fact that, given the impact of managers and teams on the experience of a posting, the burden may be more about having to work with managers who are less skilled.

236. Bringing in people from the field doesn't seem to have the desired effect of tempering the experience of HQ, rather, most people felt that those coming in from the field become overwhelmed by the culture in HQ and succumb to it. This points to the culture at HQ being more resilient than the individuals within it.

237. There seems to be an underlying assumption that the organization won't do a good job if everyone doesn't know exactly what it's like in the field. Despite rotation, people still complain about this if someone hasn't been to the field for a number of years. It seems difficult to satisfy the yearning of field staff for HQ to really know, understand and demonstrate their understanding of the particular challenges they face in their day-to-day work. This assumption takes precedence over an alternate view that the organization might do a better job if some people or roles are allowed a longer period of time for the development of specialist skills. The outcome is therefore the complete changing of international staff roles and posts every few years, thereby impacting upon consistency of knowledge, cumulative learning and requiring that roles have to be re-learnt over and over.

238. This point links to an image of an organization that continually deconstructs itself in a cyclical way, so that organizational memory and skill development are diminished. With each new change of staff in role, local approaches change and there is little long term vision or follow through as each new person seeks to make their mark on the role. The placement of people in roles they may not be trained for or experienced in adds to the instability of direction. Of course no organization remains static, with or without rotation, and people move and change regardless. The inbuilt nature of this change has significant impact, however, that is less likely to be absorbed in the life cycle manner of natural attrition, given the magnitude of it. This is not to argue that it shouldn't be done, it is more, as the comment below highlights, the way in which it is done that is perhaps critical.

> "His take on rotation is that it provides a chance for renewal, regeneration and cross fertilisation if done well that the organization can benefit from. He himself has enjoyed the changes he has made."

> "At times it feels that things are not institutionalised because of rotation. The office starts an initiative and it's not pursued when a new person comes. Different people, different approach; this has many effects on the business"

> "Because you're only going to be somewhere for a short time, you don't engage as much"

239. Many staff perceive that the organization relies upon the national staff to "hold the institutional memory", and this is an often-repeated comment. In a context where national staff hold such an insecure and comparatively powerless position in the organization in many situation, this concept, while meaning well, also has a patronising and exploitative tone to it.

240. The aim of sharing expertise in the organization is in part achieved and is something that many people are satisfied with. There are, however, a number of factors that undermine its effectiveness, such as placing people in roles to which they are not suited, placing considerable personal strain on these individuals.

"It's rotation for the sake of rotation. We need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of staff and plan ahead to where they should be placed. It makes no sense, rotation should be to use the skills acquired over years, to be used to best effect"

"Rotation is a serious problem. The notion that every staff member can do everything denies the concept of specialisation. If a finance specialist has to move and become a programme person, it lowers things down to the lowest common denominator."

"It's a strength that rotation brings experience from so many different operations, but there is a strain on the personal life and this impacts on the work"

In the service of organizational defences

241. The preoccupation throughout the organization with rotation is a reflection of its complexity and central role in serving the purpose of the "as if" primary task of regenerating and organising the organization. As someone commented, despite the fact that there are around 6,000 employees in the organization, only about one fifth are international staff subject to rotation. However the proportion of time taken with the logistics and complexities of the policy seems on some levels ill matched to the relatively smaller number of staff it is concerned with.

242. With the recurring anxiety created by the need to sort out the next post, and even to think about the next few progressions, there is in effect, a built in distraction to the primary purpose of people's roles. Many people commented that one spends the first year settling and learning their role, the next year working and the following one searching and lobbying for the next position. Many staff pointed out that the amount of time spent worrying about postings and lobbying for them could be seen to significantly impact on operational effectiveness and productivity. The process of filling posts appears to be done in a rush at the last minute before the deadline, increasing further the impact on productivity. For that period of time in particular, there is almost a complete preoccupation with postings by a significant proportion of the organization.

243. Given the competition for postings, the anxiety about being posted to work with an unpopular manager, the enormous impact on one's life over a period of a few years, the prospect of becoming a SIBA with its attendant stigma, and the concerns about family, for example, there is little wonder that rotation generates enormous anxiety within the organization. Competition, anxiety and frustration with this repeated cycle are then also expressed through the frequent accusations of each other being more interested in their careers than in the work. So while being ostensibly in existence to serve the purpose of the organization, it might be argued that rotation also significantly undermines that very purpose.

"It also disrupts the work of the organization. Every year a third of the international staff are moving. It's not right, it costs a bomb. All in the interest of fairness, treating everybody the same way. It means a person in Angola must have a chance to be in Geneva and a person in Geneva must be punished by going to Rwanda. It's true that it

builds capacity of the organization, but you have to be able to manage it, to marry staff interests with the organizational interests."

"The amount of time that gets wasted currying favour with prospective bosses"

244. Rotation also serves a purpose of assisting in avoidance by the organization of dealing with poor performance, as mentioned previously. People spoke about the difficulty of effectively managing a situation of poor performance when no one supervises a person long enough to properly track and follow through with performance management. A lot of problems may be in effect buried or swept under the carpet by the chaos created by constant movement. Thus it also serves as a masking screen for performance and provides an excuse for not managing staff as well as a means to avoid the anxiety evoked by the difficulty of the work and how hard it is to get it right.

245. When the new version of the policy was discussed at a staff forum late in 2003, an impression was given that much of the complexity and confusion in the latest version was a result of the difficulty in coming to agreement with staff council representatives as to how things should work. This long and arduous process, as described, seemed to highlight a number of the issues discussed in this report. The constant attacking of thinking on the policy and the failed attempts to get it right are in part an expression of envy and competition. Much authority and power seemed to be handed over to staff, particularly through the staff council, allowing this competition to be played out. What was achieved was a policy that no one seemed to be very happy with.

246. There was some satisfaction expressed with the move away from managers having "too much say" in recruitment, however, again linking to an attack upon and mistrust of authority.

"Before, the managers had too much say. The latest version is getting back to the right checks and balances"

"Should it be collegiate decisions by people not directly involved in the post or should managers be given full liberty to manage their post"

247. As mentioned above, the rotation policy places enormous strain and hardship upon many staff. A "put up with it or leave" attitude expresses a capacity of the organization to be harsh and lacking in compassion towards its staff in a way that is in stark contrast with the compassion inherent in its stated primary task.

"I felt sad at the thought of someone who has devoted so much of their life and career to an organization having such a burden upon them at this late stage in their career. While the organization demands flexibility of its staff, it is less able or willing to demonstrate it or offer it back."

"Rotation is not so good for the mental health of people. To have all international staff not able to live with their families, they don't have a stable life and this impacts on how people work. Particularly for

women, rotation has a negative impact on their children. If you're not willing to rotate, you're seen as not committed"

248. On the other hand, and as a seeming paradox, there was also a view that the organization can be too open to pressure and exploitation in order to accommodate the needs of staff. This frustration can be seen also as relating to the feeling that some are able to manipulate the system more than others.

> "It could be regarded as too compromising. In many places we don't have the right people in the right place. We put pressure on the organization to take decisions and then a lot of compromises are made. Things are said that become a means of social control; you can't step out of line. These attitudes are harped upon all the time and lead to the pressuring of the organization to succumb. We need to have confidence that the system will take care of people. The system allows itself to be exploited."

Impact on teams in the field

249. As is discussed in other sections, rotation also has an enormous impact on teams in the field, and while some of this impact can be absorbed effectively, it also seems to create problems unnecessarily at times.

> "In a workshop on stress, one of the main stressors identified was changing people in the team, having to adjust to new people."

> "It creates a big gap when everybody leaves. The internationals are all leaving this year. We blame our senior management for not noticing"

> "National staff carry the memory, carry over plans and programmes. Rotation has negative implications when you work well with one supervisor and then the next one may not have the same approach."

External relationships

Hypothesis: That the internal dynamics and relationships of the organization are mirrored in its relationships with donors, implementing partners and peer agencies.

250. As stated earlier, less time was spent with external agencies and some brief thoughts are offered here, but it needs to be emphasised that these are areas worthy of greater depth and investigation.

Donors

251. Donors viewed the organization with much affection and concern, but also reiterated many of the criticisms that UNHCR staff themselves expressed. They thought the organization's hubris and slowness to respond had caused it to become out of step with a changing external environment, and thus to fall behind in the competition. Donors are often perceived as to blame for many of the organization's problems, as though if they weren't punitive and didn't withhold money, everything would be better. Donors themselves don't agree and can be sensitive about this, and the risk is that they can react to such accusations in punitive ways, thus in fact confirming the fears.

> "In the past the overall environment was more friendly to UNHCR, donors and asylum countries. We don't see that anymore and every year the dollars are more and more earmarked"

252. There was also some recognition in house as to the need for UNHCR to take a lead in shifting the dynamics of the relationships with donors;

> "We need to be better team players; to develop a better relationship with the donors. We need to change rather than just expecting them to. Earmarking by donors is a sign of their lack of confidence in us. The ball is in our court."

> "I strongly wonder if we will continue to receive support from the international community. Some countries are not happy with us and some don't need our help anymore."

253. As is discussed elsewhere, the fear of losing funding further contributes to tense relations with donors, as well as an enormous amount of energy being placed in the service of pleasing them. There is resentment at so much of the funding being earmarked for operations of concern to donors and also regarding the requirement of some donors to have a certain percentage of their nationals employed in the organization.

> "When you report to donors you have to report that all targets were met. There is a wider recognition that the organization can learn more from failures than success stories. It would be useful for donors

to know that it's more complex. They have to encourage more transparent reporting, but they don't ask about what was not able to be achieved. This translates down to an individual level where, for example, people set objectives for themselves that they will be able to put a spin on and say they have achieved. So you get more rosy reports."

Implementing partners

254. Discussions with IPs reinforced the concern expressed by UNHCR staff that much of the success, of operations, of relationships, of teams, for example, comes down to the personal abilities and skill of individual workers. In some cases relationships were excellent and in these cases, people were very positive about their perception of the organization as whole. Rotation had a significant impact on this and agencies reported losing or gaining better relations with the changing of staff, and often described the critical impact that this could have on operations.

255. Some of the descriptions of the relationship between UNHCR and implementing partners mirrored very closely the internal dynamics between, for example, national and international staff, and in some ways also the relationship in reverse between UNHCR and donors. In a relationship where there is a power differential and one party is accountable to the other and reliant upon them for money, the experience, tensions and stresses are in part passed down the line. For example:

> "They find UNHCR can be very arrogant and seem to place themselves above their partners. This is hurtful to the (I.P.) workers, who see themselves as skilled technicians and are resentful of being talked down to. They said that often people are looking for fault and this breeds a mutual suspicion in their relationship. They are very concerned about the levels of funding, which are going down each year… When they talk about their problems with the money, they said that the UNHCR people often take the attitude that they aren't managing their funds efficiently."

256. In the same way that UNHCR staff expressed often feeling defensive in their relationship with refugees when they were simply unable to meet their demands, the criticism extended on the part of the UNHCR workers in this case seem to be an expression of a defensiveness about their own frustration at not being able to pass on adequate funds. The lack of ability to just sit down together and discuss openly the limitations of the situation was exacerbated by the stress under which the local UNHCR worker was operating. Staffing appeared at a critical low, and this inability to cover all the demands of the job was clearly reflected in the adversarial nature of the relationship between the two agencies.

257. Other impressions of UNHCR mentioned were such things as the tendency of local UNHCR staff to isolate themselves from the rest of the expatriate communities and the fact that they are much less likely to learn the local language or to make a significant effort to connect with the local community.

Relationships with peer agencies

258. At the UN level, a number of people expressed a wish to clarify roles and relationships with other agencies.

> "There is confusion between roles of other UN agencies. We lack a team environment. Turfs are not needed; this is most acute at HQ level"

259. Relationships with other international organizations such as NGOs do seem to be quite characterised by an envy that is born out the differences in wages and conditions. People on a number of occasions made flippant comments to the effect of "what would anyone at UNHCR have to get stressed about when they get so much money?" UNHCR workers themselves are conscious of this.

> "We're all excessively compensated. Contrast our wages with NGOs; the foundations for envy."

260. The problems of performance, bureaucracy and reluctance to change in the organization are also apparent to colleagues outside and impact upon external perceptions of the organization as a whole, tempered somewhat by positive interactions people have had with individuals. For example:

> "She said that there are a lot of good staff in the organization, but that over time they become worn down by their inability to innovate or make a positive impact and therefore they become the new dead wood that holds the organization up. She also mentioned that part of the problem is that there are so many staff who are not up to their jobs and that they can't be moved."

> "He said that he has come across a lot of great UNHCR staff and also a lot who were predominantly concerned about their careers, which impacts on the way they do their work."

Summary/conclusions

Organization culture

261. Organization culture is in part the frame of reference by which individuals and groups create meaning regarding their daily work and make sense of trends and developments they are required to manage. In essence, it guides and influences at every level "how we see things here" and "how we do things here". It provides an underlying framework from within which an organization may pursue the achievement of its primary task, but also, ironically, tends to develop in ways that work against that very goal, undermining performance and outcomes. For example, in order to accommodate environmental changes effectively, an organization needs to adapt or add coping mechanisms by adjusting practices and assumptions. Aspects of organization culture have the effect of restricting the options an organization has for responding to changes and the deeper levels of culture itself can be highly resistant to change. Many cultural and dynamic factors directly or indirectly impede the capacity of UNHCR to respond to a changing external environment. For example, the organization tends to be attracted to utilising a crisis or emergency mode of operation that can get in the way of reflection and long term planning. This prevents UNHCR from being able to effectively learn from experience and to consistently position itself strategically to anticipate and manage the challenges ahead. The practice of rotating international staff contributes, for example, by undermining long term thinking and follow through, as do the bureaucratic approaches and methods that slow response and render the organization somewhat less competitive in an increasingly competitive environment. A lack of cohesive leadership and direction sees programmes and divisions focussing on their own internal issues and needs, rather than working collaboratively to progress the needs of the organization as a whole.

262. Culture becomes embedded in people's thinking and feeling as unquestioned assumptions, and in their actions and patterns of relationships as unwritten rules of behaviour. These assumptions, and their related values and norms, are implicit and often outside awareness, operating and influencing practices from within a deeper dimension. They drive thinking, beliefs, feelings and actions, and, once internalised, are generally unquestioned. In UNHCR one of the most influential and prevailing unquestioned assumptions is that to do with the notion of "fairness" taking precedence over most other considerations. Assumptions are not usually founded upon fantasy, they will have at least an element of truth in them, but when they become a universal truth in themselves that disallows for other possibilities, they become restrictive and often counterproductive.

263. Organization culture is linked to the psychosocial context in which work is done; how people collaborate in doing it, the ways in which roles are taken up and practices occur in the workplace. This research found that in UNHCR, collaboration is often highly affected by the dynamics between specific groups. Two of the most prominent examples regarding the taking up of roles are the way in which roles with refugees are interpreted, and the manner in which leadership roles are both taken up

and experienced within the organization. The collective taking up of these attitudes and beliefs within groups contributes to the atmosphere of the workplace and the emotional experience of being a part of it. The psychosocial context is also shaped by the nature of the social defences that form in interaction with the emotional experience of the work context.

Organizational defences

264. Organizations develop defences against emotions that are experienced as threatening or painful, through the patterns of interactions between the individuals and groups that constitute them. These emotions may originate as a response to external conditions and stressors, internal conflict and dynamics, or through the nature of the work itself and the situation of the client group. Defences have a useful purpose when they allow staff to manage the stress of their work environment and to carry on in highly challenging circumstances. For example, in order to function effectively, staff in the field need to protect themselves from becoming overwhelmed by grief or terror during crisis situations, or from identifying too strongly with refugees in long term and desperate situations. When institutional defences gain the power to distort reality and get in the way of growth, reflection, change and the fulfilment of task, however, they can become even more problematic than the factors they have arisen to protect against. A large proportion of the work related issues that UNHCR staff identified as most difficult and stressful are directly related to the dynamics created by organizational defences, indicating that many defences are currently serving "as if" primary tasks and detracting from the core work of the organization. A prominent organization defence appears to be a reluctance to act upon what it knows to be true about itself. A number of reports and evaluations have been commissioned over the past few years, coming to some largely similar conclusions, but which have made little impact over time.

265. People and organizations tend to retreat to more basic, or primitive, emotional responses when under stress, threat or increased pressure, or during times of change, for example. Under heightened pressure people can tend to see things in black and white terms where people and ideas can be experienced as all good or all bad. Organizational defences such as splitting and projection, blame, competition and contempt, were all found to be prevalent throughout UNHCR. Although they are not experienced by all staff all of the time, there were many examples of feelings of disenfranchisement, competition and blame occurring at each level of the organization; between HQ and the field, between branch offices and sub offices, across programme areas, between staff with postings and those without and between many of the significant and contrasting interest groups. While this report devotes many pages to the exploration and specificities of many of sites of these defences and the impact they have upon achievement of the task of the organization, indeed a large proportion of the issues discussed are clearly interrelated and may be seen as an expression of a similar set of problems, emerging in a range of circumstances and in a number of different ways.

Primary task

266. This report attempts to demonstrate that while UNHCR has a clearly articulated primary task that it manages to achieve fully or partially much of the time

through the efforts of many talented and skilled staff, for a number of complex and interconnected reasons, it also acts as though it has alternative primary tasks, which are perpetuated by organizational culture and defence mechanisms, and which serve to distract focus from the core purpose of the organization, undermine its performance and potential, and create a considerable degree of internal stress and dissatisfaction.

267.   The primary task is the essential work that the organization has to do in order to exist. In the case of UNHCR, this is expressed through its mission statement, "to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees" and its mandate, "to lead and coordinate international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems." This mission is ambitious but is pragmatic and realistic given the enormity of its undertaking. There is, however, much potential for inherent ideological, practical and ethical conflicts within the mission and mandate, and the nature of the work with refugees is such that it evokes a primal anxiety that is often difficult to recognise and manage. Organizational defence mechanisms evolve as a reaction to anxiety related to the primary task, in an unconscious effort to contain and suppress it, and serve to perpetuate the alternative, "as if" tasks. "As if" primary tasks are what the organization, or separate groups within the organization, are actually behaving as though their primary task is. In UNHCR the major "as if" primary task appears to be to self-perpetuation, with a preoccupation with becoming and remaining "organised", where, for example, reporting requirements and the process of rotating staff take significant time and energy away from the core work of safeguarding the rights and well being of refugees. "As if" primary tasks are not unnecessary tasks, rather they are secondary tasks that have gained a disproportionate precedence over the actual primary task. In addition to the internal drivers, numerous external influences and restraints contribute to the development of the "as if" primary task, including the complexity of local and global politics and relationships, the imperatives of funding, such as donor accountability requirements, the unpredictability of donor support and interest and competition with other agencies, and the pressure experienced in responding to the expectations of the world at large as such a high profile organization.

Strengths and commitment

268.   In line with the themes described above, it may be tempting to experience the detailed analysis in this report of less functional aspects of the organization as a description of UNHCR as being "all bad", or in some way without hope. As mentioned, people did tend to spend more time talking about the aspects of the organization that they find problematic, and common themes emerged across the organization that gave strength and validity to their arguments. The essence of an integrated approach is the capacity to hold the "both… and" concept in mind. As stated in the introduction, UNHCR is both immensely strong, intelligent and successful, and beset by conflict, weakness, drama, pain and dysfunction. The vast majority of staff interviewed both experienced considerable dissatisfaction with many aspects of the functioning of the organization and felt a strong commitment to it, deriving a deep sense of pride and fulfilment from their work.

269. Despite the number of factors that undermine performance and reduce the potential of the organization, it should be stressed that people still get on with the job and get things done. When energy is mobilised around task, and the task is

meaningful and congruent, a great degree of satisfaction can be derived from working well and working well together. There seems a constant tension in struggling to tip the balance towards the primary task and to resist the temptation to slide back into the "as if" tasks, where satisfaction is somewhat replaced by frustration and conflict, and people lose clarity regarding the reasons they are there. The greatest examples of mobilisation around task are those during heightened emergency phases. Without clear strategies for focus and maintenance of the primary task outside emergency situations, there is a risk that people feel that these are the only venues in which their work can be truly recognised and valued, and that these are the only venues where people are too focussed upon the core task to slide into conflict and despair, creating a yearning for the "glorious days of the emergency". This of course presents an ironic bind, as emergency situations are where staff are most likely to experience trauma and stress as a result of their work role, but at the same time, where they might experience most relief from the stress of unresolved organizational problems.

270. It makes sense to suggest that one of the most important factors in addressing the weaknesses of the organization is an ability to recognise and capitalise upon its strengths. By far the two most commonly perceived strengths were the mandate and the commitment and talent of staff. The mandate as an expression of the primary task of the organization provides the framework for refocusing the work of the organization more consistently back to its core task and away from the predominance of the "as if" tasks. The articulated mission and mandate of the organization should serve as a template, acting as the means by which virtually all decisions can be made, for example through the rigorous application of the question, "does this activity serve the primary task, or detract from it?" thus providing one means to mobilise energy around task.

271. The degree of talent, experience and dedication within the organization enables it to function and to achieve great things, despite its limitations. While this fact should not invite complacency, it should also provide some encouragement and optimism regarding the way forward. Identified strengths could all be capitalised upon strategically in an effort to address some of the more problematic aspects of the organization's functioning. Further strengths identified through the research include; a firm conviction that the organization should and could be doing better, a high level of capacity to think analytically, many strong bonds and positive relationships, the existence of many talented managers and leaders, a common understanding of the organization's shortcomings at all levels, skills in dealing with all levels of operations from governmental politics to relationships with refugees, and a high degree of idealism and commitment to the cause.

272. It seems little wonder, given the complexity of the environment in which UNHCR operates and the nature of what is at stake in the work, that such culture and defences have emerged, notwithstanding the high quality of many its staff. It is an essentially universal human trait to make efforts to avoid knowing what is going on and how people are feeling about it, and it is ironic that this only serves to trap people further and cut them off from their experience and each other (Binney 2003). The central themes that emerged in relation to the discussion point to the importance of facilitating the capacity of the organization to more consistently operate from a more developed and integrated position. This would involve, for example, rethinking systems and practices that get in the way of the achievement of task,

planning strategically as well as addressing what can be tackled now, fostering the capacity to tolerate difficult feelings and reactions evoked by the work, to learn from experience, to engage with each other across important differences, and a preparedness to reflect upon and take up opportunities and challenges. Organizational defences are unavoidable and are a part of every organization, but from a more integrated position, some may be directed more creatively. Facing what is difficult is, in the end, the most effective way to free people up to get on with their core tasks, rather than allowing the "undiscussables" to sap the energy of the organization from the inside. The most central factor in achieving such a position is the mobilisation, strengthening and support of leadership within the organization. Development towards a position where, for example, challenging issues might be contained, linked and integrated rather than fragmented and split apart, can only occur through the example, bravery and guidance of UNHCR's leaders. An essential ingredient to achieving these aims also includes the will to do it, a commitment at all levels to working towards an organization that is determined to realise its potential as fully as is realistic.

Recommendations

273. The primary aim of this report is, as stated, to promote reflection and discussion, to provide a tool for thinking about policy and practice "on the go", and to compliment other processes in train to address organizational issues. Following are some ideas as to possible ways forward that logically arise out of the discussion in this report. Recommendations are grouped in two sections. The first group are the main recommendations that relate to the primary purpose of this research, that is, those relating most specifically to broader issues of organization culture. The second group are incidental recommendations related to other issues that arose in the course of the research. These recommentations are provided with less detail and attempt, as do the first group, to cross reference current processes already underway.

Key elements of organization culture

1.   Leadership and authority

This report has argued that it is critical that UNHCR values and supports the development of its leaders and managers, and in particular, the development of a positive managerial culture and a higher consistency of people management skills. Much research in the field of organizations has emphasised the primary impact that improvements in the quality of leadership and management practices have on organizational wellbeing, morale and ultimately, functioning. In the UNHCR context, this could involve for example:

1.1   Increased cohesion at the most senior levels.

It is critical that questions of leadership and authority within the organization are seen to be taken up at the highest levels. This report has demonstrated that the dynamics, attitudes and behaviour of the senior levels of management influence what happens at every other level. Specific strategies should include taking steps to improve cohesion in the Senior Management Committee and that senior managers in the organization are seen to engage in:

- Open discussion of difficult organizational issues;

- Commitment to performance review and management processes;

- Public learning and reflection, through participation in formal learning programmes and taking leadership in engaging in review and planning processes;

- Drawing of clear and manageable boundaries around task;

- Collaboration and co-ordination between different sections and programme areas;

- Support for recognition of the importance of good people management skills at every level and the impact that this has on the productivity and outcomes of the organization as a whole;

- Clarity in decision making.

1.2 High profile support and reinforcement for participation in management learning processes, and at the same time there needs to be a broad ranging approach to the development of management skills that is designed to compliment, while not entirely relying upon, in-house management learning programmes. For example;

- Reinforcement of the promotion and development of people management skills, including recognition for managers who perform well in this area, rather than for more punitive styles of management

- Exploration of mentoring, coaching and peer development opportunities, utilising the skill and knowledge of many existing managers and leaders, along with the expertise available in the Staff Development Section and perhaps expanding upon the coaching approach utilised within the MLP

- Encouragement and even expectation of all staff with leadership roles to undertake some form of management development, whether it is the MLP or an equivalent

1.3 Active supervision and support of leaders and managers in their roles by line managers

1.4 Development of mechanisms to select and "groom" potential managers with the highest degree of aptitude for the role. As one senior manager said;

"We have to groom managers. We need the mechanisms in place that permit the organization to pick the best people and not just the people who have been waiting the longest."

2. Planning and the primary task

This report has argued that lack of planning and reflection have an impact on outcomes and ability to learn from experience. A greater formalisation and modelling of the value of thinking and planning would institutionalise planning practices further and allow the organization to incorporate much of what it learns through the numerous evaluations and reports generated each year in a more structured and reliable way. It is recommended that UNHCR:

2.1 Develop means by which long range planning and thinking can occur collaboratively at a senior level.

This is in order to tackle such issues as how the organization should function in the future, what form it should take, how it will meet a changing external environment. For example, does it need to remain bureaucratic in the long term, or are there other models that could be explored that would assist in achieving its aims more efficiently?

2.2   Use improved planning and reviewing processes to develop clearer parameters and guidance regarding the primary task of the organization.

> This would assist in efforts to strengthen the focus the organization upon its core purpose, place the alternate tasks in perspective and communicate a message of greater cohesion, co-ordination and leadership. In addition, there is a need to;

- Clarify guidelines and decision-making processes in determining, for example, who is served by the organization and who is not.

- Clarify priorities that acknowledge small teams in remote areas cannot address all priority areas equally well. With so many competing priorities within the organization, the smaller teams appear to genuinely struggle to attend to the wide range of demands upon their time both with regard to implementing policy and reporting upon outcomes. If priorities could be more clearly drawn and communicated from the most senior level, to acknowledge what is achievable and realistic, a greater sense of containment to the work and an ability to focus upon the essentials may be worked towards.

2.3   Build in formal and regular planning and reflection opportunities throughout various and strategic sections of the organization

> This would aim to assist in embedding a greater planning culture. Smaller and more regular process are likely to be more effective than large retreats that happen rarely and attempt to address too much all at once.

2.4   Encourage local managers to enable regular team based reflection and discussion opportunities.

> Important issues that teams face will be more effectively addressed at the time, rather than being deferred for some time in the future, thereby ameliorating their effect upon the means by which people communicate and encouraging a culture where both reflection and action can occur.

2.5   Ensure that ground level practice informs strategy through opportunities for the field to have input into planning processes

3.   Conflict and competition

There are some specific direct, but also many indirect, interventions that may help to reduce the amount of conflict and competition between groups. In the discussion of organizational defences, it is clear that such defences as splitting, projection and competition are exacerbated by a range of other factors that contribute to a less integrated method of functioning in the organization. Therefore it makes sense to suggest that if some of the underlying problems can be ameliorated, then their negative side effects may also be reduced somewhat. For example through:

3.1   Strengthening of leadership at all levels of the organization as one of the primary interventions, as discussed above, and specifically;

- Leadership to provide increased opportunities for work groups to reflect upon their work and the impact that it has upon their experience so that

ongoing stressors are not 'turned inwards" and acted out within relationships between people and groups.

- Increased level of day to day support provided to staff, and in particular the more vulnerable staff.

- Increased leadership efforts to contain such factors as workload and work / life balance

3.2   Mobilisation of energy around primary task and refocusing the attention of workgroups to more clearly defined goals, as discussed

3.3   Attention to an increase in accountability mechanisms;.

Accountability problems are connected in part to being a part of the UN system and there are many factors outside the control of the organization itself. However, some commitment to taking up the challenge of this problem is needed to demonstrate a resolve to improve organizational performance. This has been highlighted as an issue in a number of reports, including the 2000 report "the State of UNHCR Staff", and the recent UN Integrity Survey. For example;

- Clarify decision making processes and authority and work towards a reduction in the amount of decision deferring whenever feasible. This would also have some effect in reducing the "bureaucratic feel" and slowness.

- The factors that contribute to reluctance to take decisions need to be identified and addressed, such as fear of responsibility. What are the risks inherent in taking appropriate decisions and can these be ameliorated to any extent?

- Planning is underway as a part of the headquarters review process that is proposing to devolve increased responsibility for managing budgets. With adequate support for such a change, increased accountability may be achieved, along with increased autonomy, and ability to make local decisions and respond to local issues. This report supports and encourages such a move.

- A commitment to management of poor or under performance, through, for e.g., the example of senior management, implementation of the updated "Policies And Procedures For Managing Performance" when finalised, and, critically, support for management development in improving skills in performance feedback.

- Conscious efforts to acknowledge good performance are also needed to break out of the dulling effect of treating everyone the same and the risk of bringing performance down to the lowest common denominator. What is being suggested is not grand reward schemes that are likely to be viewed with some scepticism, but some simple measures that emphasise genuine connection and recognition between people such as encouraging managers to give direct and open feedback to individuals and teams regarding good work they are doing; making efforts to include informal and ad hoc local

celebrations of team achievements and goal attainment; some organization wide recognition of achievement, even if this includes "heroically ordinary" achievements.

3.4   Some sensitisation to racial, gender and sexual stereotyping in the organization.

It is not, however, being suggested that everyone be put through a "re-education" programme, but rather some means be found for recognition that despite the many positive aspects of diversity that occur in the organization, there are also significant underlying inter group divisions.

3.5   Strengthening of staff welfare and support services.

In consultation with the Staff Welfare Team (SWT) themselves, strengthening the capacity of the staff welfare services to operate effectively at both an individual and systemic level, so that:

- All UNHCR staff can access welfare services when needed;

- There is a wider understanding of the role of SWT across the organization, improving access to and support for their activities;

- Greater and more substantial integration can be effected with other relevant sections and functions, such as HR, staff development;

- Additional attention can be offered to meeting the particular needs of more vulnerable staff, for example, new staff and those engaged in direct face to face work with refugees.

4.   Culture of sacrifice

The findings of this research encourage a rethinking of the systems that ask too much of people. There is an investment in the organization to maintain such a culture and resistance to challenging it would be significant. However, this report argues that both staff and refugees stand to benefit in the long run. Such an aim might be worked towards through, for example:

4.1   Leadership from senior levels to place reasonable boundaries around what people do.

As suggested above, clarifying primary task activities and tackling the volume of paperwork would assist in this. A review of reporting requirements has been initiated recently and this is encouraged to be seen through to fruition.

4.2   An acknowledgement of difference within the organization and reflection within appropriate fora regarding ways in which different needs and life stages might be accommodated more effectively.

As stated in the report, it is suggested that there be reinforcement of the intention of the organization to be truly diverse and to accommodate the diverse needs of its staff. In acknowledging that many people will and need to have families and relationships, for example, in order to lead a balanced life and to be as productive and effective as possible in their work, greater

transparent and acknowledged flexibility needs to be considered in many of the systems. For example, a commitment to tackling the complexity of this in the structure of the rotation system.

4.3   A challenging of many of the underlying assumptions, such as "everyone should be exactly the same" and dynamics that restrict thinking and options.

This is a less than concrete recommendation; rather it is an encouragement for anyone reading this report to take up the challenge to review their own thinking and assumptions and to consider how the individual contributes to the wider picture.

4.4   Addressing the need for some form of career management structures. As one senior staff member noted;

"It was a disastrous decision to make staff members on their own to find their posts, as though each time they are employed newly to the organization. No one is following the staff; they can fall through the cracks in the system."

More effective career management may reduce some of the anxiety regarding people's futures that impacts on interactions and the climate of the organization. The issue of career planning was emphasized in the 2000 report, "The State of UNHCR Staff", where it was stated:

"In a continuously evolving climate like UNHCR, career planning is perhaps one of the most important and challenging areas, just as career development often is for individual staff members. The organization must develop an overall vision where staff placement, development/learning, career planning and welfare reflects our internal humanitarianism."

It should be noted that as a part of the Headquarters review process currently underway, a significant revision of workforce planning is being undertaken. The complex influences of culture as explored in this report need to be taken into consideration in development of a new structure for workforce planning that would encompass such systems as career planning and rotation, in order to ensure that one set of problems is not replaced by another.

4.5   Greater access to staff welfare services, as discussed above, and taking up of the findings regarding health problems in the organization may assist people to find more ways to balance their own needs with those of the organization.

5.   Relationships with refugees

This report argues that there needs to be a greater degree of support within the organization for the development of skills in managing the face-to-face challenges of working with refugees, rather than relying upon a belief that good will and a passion for the work is enough. Through, for example:

5.1   Establishing policy and an expectation that all workers with hands on roles with refugees are given access to regular supervision and support by their managers.

As an adjunct to this, managers and supervisors need some preparation to provide coaching and support for their workers, paying particular attention to the support and development needs of more vulnerable workers, such as the less expereinced and contract staff.

5.2   Possible establishment of team or peer support and skill development strategies, such as a buddy system, regular team discussion / reflection opportunities

5.3   Ensuring that all staff who work for UNHCR in hands-on roles have access to training and education regarding managing refugee relationships and situations of trauma, aggression, etc.

Additional recommendations / issues of concern

6.   Reporting

As stated above, a recent working group has been convened to consider the problem of excessive reporting. The following ideas may be of use to this process;

6.1   The process could benefit from an increased co-ordination between departments in HQ and a central means to assume responsibility for management of the volume of work that is sent out.

This might include seeking a means to regulate the flow and the timing of demands that are sent to the field, and ensure consistency in the messages and information sent.

6.2   A commitment at HQ that reports from the field that are viewed as essential and non-negotiable, will be responded to in a timely manner.

The lack of feedback from HQ when reports are submitted has an impact upon relationships between HQ and the field and also upon the morale of workers in the field. If reports are seen as essential, their passage, progress and impact must be fed back in order to retain good will and an understanding of their value.

6.3   Donors are also key players in reporting, and it is encouraging to note that the current review of reporting has included donors and other agencies in the process.

It may be useful to make the link between current reporting requirements and their impact on the achievement of the primary task, with a view to developing some realistic compromises, where possible.

7.   Rotation Policy

There is evidence throughout the report as to the problematic side effects of the rotation policy as it currently stands, alongside its many benefits, with one of its major side effects being a distraction from the primary task. As already mentioned, the current review of workforce planning is taking a wider view of the employment and deployment of staff, and proposed changes under consideration will have a significant effect upon the system of rotation. Some aspects that need to be addressed in such a review include such factors as;

- The pervasive expectation and desire for long term employment,

- The potential impact of increasing the number of staff on short term contracts, drawing upon current knowledge and experience in the wider industry

- The possibility of a wider range of career "streams" to suit people at different stages of their professional careers and life cycles

- The fact that many women already enact a different career pattern when they choose to leave due to the inability to manage both family and career satisfactorily

- The potential benefits of recruiting people at different levels of the organization, bringing in skills and experience from outside

8.   Nationals, Contract Staff, JPOs and UNVs

Consideration needs to be given to the level of support offered to national and contract staff, including JPOs and UNVs. Commitment to addressing the needs of staff who are the most vulnerable and, at times, disenfranchised would make a difference to their experience. For example through:

8.1   Increased support and supervision for these staff by the managers responsible for them, rather than leaving them to their own devices to work into a state of burnout

8.2   Addressing the issues of status in an acknowledgement of what they offer to the organization, with care and attention paid to combating the impression that they are they to be used up as cheap labour.

9.   SIBAs

The solution to the problem of having so many staff in between assignments is clearly a long term one and something that is already being tackled in a number of ways. To improve the psychological impact of being without a role in the organization, there needs to be:

9.1   Greater efforts to reduce the stigma of SIBA status

9.2   Meaningful deployment of people while they have no formal role

9.3   Further reflection upon how SIBA status is used and what other purposes it might be serving

Many myths and perceptions circulate in the organization regarding SIBAs, for example, as to how many people are languishing at home happily on SIBA status for years in a row, refusing posts. Good, clear and accurate information needs to be accessible and passed around in order to temper the more colourful and detrimental ideas. For example;

> "It's a question of perception. We're really only concerned about 15 to 20 who aren't working. Most are working left right and centre."

10.   National Staff

While the differentials in pay and conditions of national staff most likely cannot be resolved, some challenging of the status quo could be of value. A shift in the dynamics between groups could be affected through:

10.1   Wider support and supervision of international staff in the development of culturally sensitive leadership skills.

10.2 Development of strategies for the consistent recognition of national staff skills, knowledge, cultural understandings, and longevity.

10.3 Greater discretion might be given to country representatives to make some decisions regarding staffing issues in their areas, allowing them to respond to local needs and circumstances within their budget restraints.

10.4 Review of leadership opportunities for national staff, with perhaps some greater local discretion regarding promotion or acting in leadership positions, that might challenge the presumption of seniority of all international staff, particularly when they are inexperienced and without leadership preparation.

11. Women

As the particular needs of many women are not taken into account in the structures of the organization, and the "fairness" principle sacrifices many women's interests, addressing these as suggested in other sections should have some positive effects for women. In addition, the organization has many talented and articulate women who are well placed to lead the way forward in effecting real change in attitudes and strategies towards the establishment of gender equity in UNHCR. More than "lip service" needs to be paid to the idea of gender equity in the organization, however, and making this shift requires that not just women are left with the burden of doing the work, but that those who currently hold greater power are prepared to participate as well, in order to achieve a more equitable environment.

12. HQ and field relations

Addressing the problems of reporting and the volume of paperwork coming out of HQ would go an enormous way to improving relations between HQ and the field. Further suggestions include:

12.1 The current review of the desk functions at HQ should make some significant progress in addressing the need for more consistent and positive interactions between HQ and the field.

12.2 Addressing the manner in which HQ staff in a range of roles respond to email and telephone inquiries from the field.

12.3 In an acknowledgment that it will always "feel like" those further from the front line have forgotten what it is like to face the day-to-day pressures of the field, some efforts could be made to ameliorate this experience. This may be achieved to some extent through the ways in which HQ and senior managers engage with field staff through the work.

12.4 Clarifying and identifying any areas where autonomy over day to day staffing, budgetary and resource decisions can be truly decentralised, to respond to the specific needs of different regions. The proposed "envelope" system of decentralising financial control is a clear potential move in this direction.

13.   Human Resources

Recognition of the role that Human Resources play in the mind of the organization may help in developing a strategy for improving relations and interactions between HR and the rest of the staff. As much as HR staff may not feel they are "to blame" and blame is not the issue, the need and desire of staff to be "cared for well" by HR needs to be recognised for constructive and creative change to occur.

13.1.   This may need to start with HR themselves, in evaluating "client service" skills, supporting HR staff in dealing with conflict situations, and support and reinforcement for "Client Orientation" training being developed through SDS

13.2   Consideration of how policies and procedures might be made more accessible to staff, who rely upon the knowledge and care that they receive from this support section.

13.3   Attention to the simplification and consistency of policy in the longer term

14.   Donors

This research gained limited data related specifically to what is currently being done with regard to managing donor relations. Some general thoughts are offered bearing this in mind. The relationship between UNHCR and donors may need to be managed more proactively, both in terms of fostering closer and more positive relations and improving the internal perceptions of donor roles. Donors seem to be subject to a great many projections and carry the blame for much frustration in the organization. This is counterproductive in many ways.

Referring back to the mission and the mandate of the organization, it would serve the primary task of "safeguarding the rights and well-being of refugees" and "leading and coordinating international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems" to take up a firm position advocating for the creation of an environment whereby provision of these services could be more effectively achieved. Given such factors as the anxiety created by inconsistent donor support and the degree to which funds are earmarked for specific operations, thereby disadvantaging others, some strategies might include:

14.1   Aiming to raise awareness of the impact that relationships with donors have on the ability of the organization to achieve its primary task.

14.2   Creation of opportunities for open dialogue regarding the current situation and strategies for improvement

14.3   Increased advocacy for specific operations

15.   Implementing Partners

Skills in relations with implementing partners could be further developed to ensure a greater consistency and sensitivity to the nature of the relationship, perhaps linked in with other relevant programmes.

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