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oversight and evaluation

Policy Development and Evaluation

Report by the High Commissioner

Summary

The present report has been prepared in conformity with the decision of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to receive a report on evaluation at its annual plenary session (A/AC.96/1003, para. 25.1 (f) (vi)). The period covered by this report is from mid-2008 to mid-2009.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) is located in UNHCR's Executive Office and reports to the High Commissioner. It also works in close association with the Assistant High Commissioners for Operations and Protection. The work of PDES is guided by the UNHCR Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) Norms, Standards and Code of Conduct.

2. The PDES work programme is established on the basis of regular consultations with the High Commissioner and members of the Executive Office, as well as with other senior managers and external stakeholders, including Executive Committee members, United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as the non-governmental organizations (NGO) community. The programme is organized on a thematic basis and adopts an integrated approach, involving policy development, evaluation, research and publications.

3. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for each evaluation project specify how the findings and recommendations of that project will be utilized. Multi-stakeholder Steering Committees are established for each major evaluation. Those Committees are responsible for approving the ToR, monitoring progress, reviewing draft evaluation reports, as well as overseeing project outcomes and impact. PDES strives to ensure that all evaluation teams are gender balanced and involve staff members or consultants with appropriate language skills and local knowledge. PDES publishes its reports in languages other than English in order to contribute to broader dissemination and enhance impact.

II. CAPACITY BUILDING

4. PDES has seven staff members, two of whom are Junior Professional Officers. All staff members have received external and on-the-job training in evaluation objectives and methods. The Service augments its capacity through the engagement of interns, consultants and academic researchers working on a pro bono basis. The formulation of a new UNHCR Evaluation Policy and a planned external review of PDES have both been postponed as a result of the ongoing Headquarters structural and management change exercise.

III. DISSEMINATION AND UTILIZATION

5. PDES is currently examining the way that the Service's outputs are disseminated within UNHCR, in order to ensure that they are brought to the prompt attention of relevant stakeholders within the Office, and that they are effectively utilized for the purposes of policymaking, planning and programming. While PDES reports are currently circulated widely within UNHCR, this form of dissemination will be supplemented by the provision of regular briefings to senior management and other staff members. PDES will also strive to ensure that specific findings and recommendations are drawn to the attention of appropriate entities within the Office, and that those findings and recommendations are utilized in the formulation of learning programmes. The Service will also work with the Office for Organizational Development and Management to ensure that UNHCR's *Focus* software and results-based management system are more effectively linked to the policy development and evaluation function.

IV. REFUGEE PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS

6. PDES has been working closely with the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS) to ensure that the findings and recommendations of an independent evaluation of UNHCR's role in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are effectively utilized in the formulation of a three-year organizational strategy on this issue. The Service has also initiated a global and independent review of the implementation of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) initiative. In addition to these major projects, PDES has completed studies on the issue of public health equity in refugee situations in different regions of the world, and on the refugee protection implications of witchcraft accusations.

V. URBAN DISPLACEMENT

7. In preparation for the 2009 meeting of the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, PDES, working in close association with the Division of Operational Support (DOS), has developed the concept note and established an extensive programme of work on the issue of urban displacement. This includes a review of UNHCR's recent experience in relation to Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic; a scoping study on refugees, displaced persons and returnees in urban areas, undertaken in association with the Cities Alliance, a global coalition of municipalities and their development partners; and a more detailed study of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Abidjan, Khartoum and Mogadishu. PDES also represents UNHCR in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) task force on meeting humanitarian challenges in urban areas, which is chaired by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).

VI. RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

8. PDES has completed evaluations of the UNHCR return and reintegration programmes in Angola and southern Sudan. These evaluations have fed into the policy development process on reintegration issues and are being used as a basis for country-level planning. Following the publication of a PDES workshop report on the use of cash grants in reintegration programmes, the Service has undertaken a review of the use and impact of such grants in Burundi. An evaluation of the Senegal-Mauritania repatriation and reintegration programme is currently at the planning stage. PDES represents UNHCR in a consultative group that has been established to guide a multi-donor evaluation of peacebuilding activities in southern Sudan.

VII. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION

9. PDES has commenced a series of reviews of UNHCR's role in mixed migration situations, beginning with the Spanish Canary Islands and Italy. Further reviews of this type are envisaged in relation to Mexico, Morocco, South Africa and Yemen. In association with DIPS, the Service has been undertaking follow-up to the evaluation of UNHCR's role in relation to human trafficking. PDES has continued to represent UNHCR in the Global Migration Group and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), and prepared a background paper on mixed migrations for the 2008 meeting of the GFMD.

VIII. HUMANITARIAN AND UNITED NATIONS REFORM

10. PDES represents UNHCR in the steering committee established for the second phase of the inter-agency evaluation of the “Cluster Approach”. In late 2008, PDES organized a lessons-learned workshop on UNHCR’s role in integrated United Nations missions: a report of that meeting and a policy guidance note on the issue of integrated missions will be published. In association with other Headquarters entities, PDES has prepared a review of the humanitarian space challenges encountered by UNHCR. The Service also made a presentation on the issue to an IASC task force meeting in June 2009.

IX. ACCOUNTABILITY TO BENEFICIARIES

11. PDES has played a key role in all aspects of UNHCR’s involvement in a “peer review on accountability to disaster-affected populations” - an initiative of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), an alliance of nine major international humanitarian organizations and networks. The purpose of the review, which draws to a close in early 2010, is to understand the range and diversity of approaches to accountability; to share best practices, challenges, and learning within and between participating agencies; and to inform decisions about the prioritization and integration of accountability mechanisms in the programmes of those agencies.

X. SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

12. At the request of the High Commissioner, PDES commissioned an independent evaluation titled “Assuring effective supply chain management to support UNHCR’s beneficiaries”. Undertaken by the Fritz Institute, which specializes in humanitarian logistics, the evaluation made an important contribution to UNHCR’s structural and management change process and was instrumental in the establishment of a new Division of Emergency and Supply Management.

XI. PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS

13. PDES prepared the discussion paper on the issue of protracted refugee situations for the 2008 meeting of the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, and assisted with the preparations for that meeting. The Service has published an additional study focusing more specifically on UNHCR’s role in such situations.

XII. OTHER ACTIVITIES

14. PDES prepared UNHCR’s first policy statement on climate change, natural disasters and human displacement, and has represented UNHCR in a number of IASC working groups and international conferences on this topic, including the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan, Poland. PDES worked with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to produce a joint article on the relationship between environmental factors and human mobility for the United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA) 2009 State of World Population report. PDES also published a study on household energy strategies in refugee and displaced persons’ camps.

15. The Service acted as focal point for an evaluation of UNHCR's Joint Organizational Strategy with Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The Service has contributed to preparations for high-level meetings between the High Commissioner and the heads of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IOM and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). At the request of the High Commissioner, PDES is preparing an assessment of the potential impact of the global economic crisis on UNHCR and persons of concern to the Office.

16. As a service to other Headquarters entities and with the aim of promoting structured reflection and learning within the organization, PDES has moderated or facilitated meetings on a variety of topics, including protection planning, the AGDM strategy, staff security and the integrated missions planning process. The Service has also continued to organize occasional staff seminars, "food-for-thought" sessions and guest lectures, covering topics such as irregular maritime migration in the Gulf of Aden, witchcraft accusations and children's rights, as well as the implications of climate change for migration and displacement.

XIII. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

17. Since 2008, all new evaluation reports have been sent directly to Executive Committee members. PDES staff met Executive Committee members on an informal basis in February 2009 to discuss the Service's functions and work programme. PDES also contributed to a donor briefing on the Iraq situation in June 2009, when the Service presented the initial findings of its review of UNHCR's activities in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Service strives to maintain a close working relationship with Executive Committee member States that conduct or commission evaluations of UNHCR programmes, so as to avoid any duplication of activities. PDES has continued to represent UNHCR in relation to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).

18. Between October 2008 and July 2009, PDES published 12 papers in the series "New Issues in Refugee Research". The Service also contributed chapters to a book on protracted refugee situations and another volume on post-conflict peacebuilding. Each edition of the "Forced Migration Review" includes one article provided by PDES.

19. PDES has represented UNHCR at a number of conferences, workshops and other meetings during the reporting period. These include the annual meeting of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration, the inaugural meeting of the International Humanitarian Studies Association, the Harvard International Development Conference, the Metropolis International Steering Committee and the Human Development Report Advisory Panel.