

ENHANCEMENT OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION IN UNHCR
Submitted to the Inspection and Evaluation Service of UNHCR

November 1998

PLAN:NET 2000 Ltd
201-1225a Kensington Road NW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada, T2N 3P8
Phone: (403) 270-0217
Fax: (403) 270-8672
E-mail: plannet@cadvision.com

Acknowledgement

This review of the evaluation function in UNHCR was undertaken during a two month period in the fall of 1998. We wish to express our appreciation for the willingness with which officers of the Inspection and Evaluation Service have discussed issues in an open and forthright manner, in a mutual effort to discover ways to improve the service. In particular, we wish to thank Mr. Juan Amunategui, Director of IES, and Mr. Lowell Martin, Evaluation Co-ordinator for their co-operation and insights. We also thank members of the advisory committee for their valuable opinions, as we thank the IES support staff for assistance in many areas, and the many HCR staff members who generously agreed to be interviewed. Most particularly, however, we wish to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Robert White who managed the whole evaluation process in an expertly manner and gave many valuable commentaries on the draft document.

Frans F. Anema
for
Plan:Net 2000

| TABLE OF CONTENTS | |
|---|---|
| Part One: Current Condition of Evaluation | |
| <u>Executive Summary</u> | |
| <u>Introduction</u> | |
| <u>Chapter 1: The Inspection Function</u> | |
| ● | 1.1 Mandate of the Inspection Unit |
| ● | 1.2 Inspection Process |
| ● | 1.3 Inspection Focus |
| ● | 1.4 Inspection Results |
| ● | 1.5 Link with Internal Audit |
| <u>Chapter 2: The Central Evaluation Function</u> | |
| ● | 2.1 Staffing of the Central Evaluation Unit |
| ● | 2.2 Types and Quality of Evaluation Reports |
| ● | 2.3 Cost Efficiency |
| ● | 2.4 Methodological Approach |
| ● | 2.4.1 Who carries out evaluations |

- 2.4.2 Annual evaluation plan
- 2.4.3 How are evaluations conducted
- 2.5 Dissemination of Evaluation Findings
- 2.5.1 Public transparency
- 2.5.2 Internal transparency
- 2.5.3 Linkage to policy making

Chapter 3: Self Evaluation in UNHCR

- 3.1 The concept of Self Evaluation
- 3.2 Planning in UNHCR
- 3.3 Monitoring in UNHCR
- 3.4 An Integrated Approach to Self Evaluation

Part Two: Key Steps in Enhancing Evaluation

Introduction

Chapter 1: Establishing the Enabling Structure

- 1.1 Ensuring Management Commitment
- 1.2 Organisational Placement of Central Evaluation
- 1.3 Provision of Adequate Staff Resources
 - 1.3.1 Central evaluation
 - 1.3.2 Self evaluation by Bureaux
- 1.4 Provision of Adequate Financial Resources
 - 1.4.1 Central evaluation
 - 1.4.2 Self evaluation by Bureaux
 - 1.4.3 Total cost implications
- 1.5 Required Supporting Services
 - 1.5.1 Enhancement of planning in UNHCR
 - 1.5.2 Training in planning, monitoring/evaluation

Chapter 2: Improvements to the Evaluation Cycle

- 2.1 Strategic Planning for Evaluation
 - 2.1.1 The need for a long term vision
 - 2.1.2 Co-ordination of evaluation planning
- 2.2 An Enhanced Methodological Approach
 - 2.2.1 Human resources
 - 2.2.2 Preparation and management of evaluations
- 2.3 Dissemination and Feedback
 - 2.3.1 Dissemination mechanisms
 - 2.3.2 Feedback mechanisms

Chapter 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

Annexes

- UNHCR Central Evaluation Function; Proposed Work Breakdown Structure
- Proportionate Use of Evaluation Specialists during 1997 and 1998
- Evaluation Follow-up Activities
- Evaluation Matrix

List of Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| CDR | Centre for Documentation and Research |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| DOS | Division of Operational Support |
| EXCOM | Executive Committee |
| IES | Inspection and Evaluation Service |
| LFA | Logical Framework Analysis |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OEDE | Office of Evaluation of the WFP |
| OIOS | Office of Internal Oversight Services |
| OMS | Operations Management System |
| ORB | Operations Review Board |
| PCS | Programme Co-ordination Section |
| PMR | Project Monitoring Report |
| RBM | Results Based Management |
| Sitrep | Situation Report |
| SMC | Senior Management Committee |
| SPMR | Sub-Project Monitoring Report |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commission for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WBS | Work Breakdown Structure |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

Executive Summary

Introduction

This review of the evaluation function in UNHCR is composed of two parts. The first part examines characteristics of the current condition; the second part suggests a number of key steps to enhance the current condition.

Present systems and procedures in the Agency are not well geared to encourage learning from experience. There are a number of dimensions at play here. They range from various insufficiencies observed in the project planning and monitoring process, to a lack of resources devoted to evaluation, and an embryonic dissemination and feedback system that fails to nourish learning effectively.

Current project and programme planning neither facilitates nor anticipates evaluation. The OMS change management team has identified a number of shortcomings in planning that directly affect the ease with which subsequent evaluation can be conducted. Of importance in particular is the need to introduce a Logical Framework Analysis approach to planning, to emphasise results rather than outputs, to introduce participatory planning with partners, and to establish a solutions strategy to planning that would do away with the artificiality of geographic borders and annual planning horizons. At the same time, current project and programme planning documents do not include a budget for

subsequent evaluation, fail to identify an evaluation plan for the project or programme in question, and do not call for a clear indication of lessons learned from previous experience. The OMS change management team recognises these and other problems and is attempting to address them.

The current practice of monitoring similarly inhibits the evaluation function. Periodic reporting is primarily designed to accompany and support the submission of financial statistics. Former guidelines that provided a useful framework for self evaluation reporting in the 1980s were superseded in 1990 by a new set of instructions for the completion of Project Monitoring Reports in a revised Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual. Not only were these new guidelines inferior to the previous ones from the point of view of evaluative feedback, training to complete these PMRs was never fully provided. As a result, current monitoring reports are not designed to serve as a basis for subsequent evaluation. They are, by and large, not analytical in nature and fail to assess progress against objectives. The OMS change management team is currently working towards an enhancement of the monitoring system in the Agency.

While evaluation would benefit greatly from improvements in planning and monitoring systems, it would not be wise to postpone enhancement to the evaluation function until a transformation in such systems has been achieved. The current condition of evaluation is such that corrective action is needed now.

This study has looked at the three main evaluative instruments of the Agency, central level evaluation, self evaluation by the Bureaux and the inspection function.

Central Evaluation

The central evaluation function in UNHCR started in 1973 when the first evaluation post was established. The Central Evaluation Unit became a part of the Inspection and Evaluation Service in 1995. Over the years numerous evaluation studies have been produced. These studies were generally considered useful documents, but mostly so when the topics coincided with the interests of the Senior Management Committee, and the quality of the study was high. For some time now voices have been raised, both internally and externally by member countries, about the impact of central evaluation on Agency-wide learning, and the degree of commitment top management displays towards the overall function. Our review of the function tends to support this sense of concern.

At the moment there is only one existing evaluation officer position, the one of the Co-ordinator. Two previous positions were absorbed by, respectively, the Inspection Unit and the newly established investigation function. A single position for an Agency with some 5400 staff world wide, with field offices numbering in excess of 120 and a total operating budget of some US \$1 billion, working under most trying conditions in collaboration with countless partners, is not sufficient. In contrast, the WFP carries out central level evaluations with 6 officers, and the UNDP has 4 officers. To try to compensate for this shortage, the Evaluation Co-ordinator uses UNHCR staff awaiting permanent assignments. Such people, however, are not necessarily evaluation specialists, in spite of the other good qualities they may have. In this report we are suggesting the creation of four additional central evaluation positions, three at the P4 level and one at the P3 level, making it five in total including the position of the Evaluation Co-ordinator.

The total annual central evaluation budget is also very modest. The estimated total budget for central evaluation in 1997 (US \$600,000) amounted to 0.05% of the total Agency budget (US \$1.2 billion) in that year. In contrast, the WFP devoted about four times as much (0.19% of total budget) to evaluation in 1997.

In this report we are suggesting a substantially increased total central evaluation budget roughly estimated at US \$1.5 million annually, which would include the above mentioned staff, an allocation for an administrative budget of US \$0.25 million, and US \$0.5 million for outsourcing.

This shortage of staff and financial resources tends to prescribe the type of evaluation studies that can be reasonably undertaken, both in terms of subject area, scope and design. At the same time, it would be difficult to do justice to the more ambitious topics which seem ripe for an evaluative study, such as UNHCR's impact on the environment, relationship with partners, capacity building, re-integration, etc.

Aside from resource constraints, the central evaluation function could benefit greatly from certain improvements in methodology. It is recognised that availability of sufficient resources might facilitate the introduction of a more systematic methodological approach. Improvements are required in annual and long term planning of an evaluation programme. There is a need to introduce a more long-term perspective in establishing an evaluation programme in order to test Agency policies and strategies against realities in the field. The type of evaluation expertise required to conduct evaluations needs to be revisited. A predominant reliance on former or current UNHCR staff to conduct evaluations should be tempered by possible new insights that could be obtained from the private sector, as well as the introduction of more joint evaluations with interested member countries and partners. The way in which evaluations are individually planned and conducted need to be improved. The actual conduct of the evaluation should be subject to a more disciplined methodological approach, including a standardisation of reporting, that could enhance the quality of findings and the feedback of lessons learned.

Furthermore, significant improvements in the dissemination and feedback functions could be envisaged, improvements that could foster learning more effectively that has taken place in the past. Of particular importance would be a dissemination process that would make findings available to staff on demand, with an automated system playing a predominant role. A much more powerful feedback system could also be envisaged, whereby strong linkages are established between evaluation on the one hand, and top management, programme management, programme staff, Agency guidelines and training on the other hand. Suggestions are provided in this report concerning a more viable dissemination and feedback system.

Self Evaluation by Bureaux

Evaluations carried out by Bureaux of their own activities (i.e. the so-called self evaluations) are very infrequent. A number of causes can be found for this situation. On the one hand, they seem to reside in the earlier mentioned shortcomings in the planning and monitoring systems, and the fact that an apparently useful self evaluation process was replaced in the late 1980s by Project Monitoring Reports that are primarily descriptive and non analytical in nature. More fundamentally, however, is the absence of a meaningful self evaluation culture in the Bureaux. Improvements in this culture will no doubt result from improvements in planning and monitoring, but in the short term more will be needed.

We are suggesting in this report that an evaluation co-ordinator be appointed, on a pilot basis, to the office of the Director in each one of the three largest Bureaux, occupying a staff function with clear terms of reference. The tasks would basically involve the design and management of a self evaluation programme for the Bureau concerned, in a way that would encourage and support evaluation efforts

by the field office. This implies co-ordinating, in collaboration with the field office, the formulation of annual self evaluation plans, the introduction of the right methodology, the management of the actual studies themselves, the implementation of a dissemination and feedback system, and required follow-up activities. The methodological, dissemination and feedback principles identified for central evaluation will also be applicable to self evaluation. The introduction of operational adjustments as a result of findings, would require the establishment of strong linkages between self evaluation and project/programme planning, new policies and implementation strategies, programme management, manuals/guidelines and training. Of key importance will be the link with the central evaluation function in order to co-ordinate Agency-wide evaluation planning, integrate a common dissemination and feedback strategy, introduce consistent methodological approaches, and engage in joint evaluation efforts where required.

Since current project planning in the Bureaux does not call for a budgetary allocation to perform an evaluation of operations at the appropriate moment (the design and timing of which to be a joint decision between the Bureau's evaluation co-ordinator and the field office), it will be necessary to set aside an annual self evaluation budget. It is estimated that an allocation of US \$200,000 per year for each one of the three Bureaux selected for this pilot project would be sufficient. With a revised planning system envisaged for the year 2000, an evaluation budget could be included in the planning document against specific evaluative activities envisaged.

Inspection

Inspection within the IES, very much an evaluative activity, commenced in 1995 and has become, in a few short years, a feedback mechanism that is frequently used by management. It provides, essentially, a management audit. Close to half of all UNHCR field offices will have been inspected by the end of 1998. Looking at its mandate, however, it would appear that a focus on management audit does not fully satisfy the original intent of the service. The mandate includes a *"review of UNHCR impact in given countries and regions"*, suggesting a more evaluative approach than a management audit would imply, an approach that would measure achievements against objectives.

Furthermore, there is a need for a more formally expressed day-to-day relationship between the Inspection Unit and UNHCR's internal auditors which report to the Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) in New York. While the overall relationship is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding, the day-to-day relationship is not. Because of the potential that exists for overlap, the scope for complementarity that is inherent in the two operations, the need for consultation on annual programmes and strategies, as well as the need to keep each other informed regularly with respect to results, it might be useful to subject this relationship to a more formal process than exists now.

Evaluation Structure

It will be necessary to create an enabling structure that would allow evaluation to take place efficiently and effectively in the Agency. Of importance is the right organisational placement for the evaluation function. For central evaluation, this would mean the amalgamation of the Centre for Documentation and Research with the Central Evaluation function. CDR provides a complementary policy research function and, with improvements to the current information technology system, could play a useful role in the dissemination and feedback process that forms an integral part of evaluation. For self evaluation the right organizational placement would mean, as was mentioned earlier, the appointment of an

evaluation co-ordinator at the Bureau Director's office. At the same time, the creation of an enabling structure would require significantly more staff and financial resources. These and other suggestions have been captured in a number of recommendations that appear below. A small number of key lessons have been extracted and appear at the end of this executive summary

Recommendations

1. *Consideration should be given to the amalgamation of the Central Evaluation Unit with the Centre for Documentation and Research in order to enhance learning and policy formulation in the Agency.*
2. *Four additional evaluation positions need to be created in the Central Evaluation Unit, three at the P4 level and one at the P3 level (making it five in total), accompanied by the creation of at least two support positions, one secretarial, the other clerical.*
3. *An Evaluation Co-ordination Officer should be appointed on a pilot basis, in a staff capacity, to the Director's office in each of the following Bureaux: (i) Central East and West Africa; (ii) Europe (including Yugoslavia); and (iii) Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.*
4. *An annual Central Evaluation budget, to be used exclusively for outsourcing, should be established at the US \$0.5 million level.*
5. *An annual allocation for outsourcing and administration of US \$200,000 should be made available to each one of the three Bureaux selected for the pilot phase of the self evaluation function.*
6. *The Inspection Service should move beyond its current focus on management audit and introduce the concept of performance measurement which reviews achievements against objectives; it should also subject the relationship between inspection and internal audit to a more formal process that exists now.*
7. *A long term evaluation strategy should be drafted that would guide the overall evaluation function of the Agency and form the basis for an annual evaluation plan incorporating both central evaluation as well as self evaluation.*
8. *Sources of evaluation expertise should become more diversified: (i) a carefully screened roster of private sector evaluation consultants should be established as a basis for increased use of private sector expertise; (ii) the scope for more joint evaluations with member governments donor organisations should be actively explored; (iii) participatory evaluations with partners should be undertaken.*
9. *An Evaluation Manual should be prepared that provides standards for project and programme evaluation in order to guide the overall evaluation function in the Agency. The Manual should also outline the key linkages that should be established and maintained between evaluation and other systems and procedures in the Agency.*
10. *A study should be carried out to design and cost a structured automated evaluation retrieval system to allow staff user friendly desk top access to evaluation findings and lessons learned.*
11. *A comprehensive dissemination and feedback strategy should be drafted for management approval, using principles and practices outlined in this report.*
12. *The findings of this report, including its recommendations, should be submitted to member countries with a view to obtaining their concurrence with the suggested approach, and ascertaining availability of additional*

resources that may be required.

Main Lessons Learned

Among the various lessons that could be derived from this study, three essential ones have been retained. They are the following:

- 1. The establishment of an effective evaluation function, capable of producing meaningful results, requires adequate staff and financial resources. Without such resources many compromises need to be made that seriously affect the scope and design of the studies, as well as the quality of feedback.*
- 2. In order to create a true learning culture in the Agency, it is important to realise that the establishment of an effective dissemination and feedback system is as important as the relevance and quality of the evaluations themselves.*
- 3. The enhancement of the evaluation function cannot be achieved through piecemeal improvements of selected aspects. It requires a comprehensive approach that recognises the interdependence of planning, monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as the intimate connection that exists among the various steps within the evaluation cycle itself.*

Part One: Current Condition of Evaluation

Introduction

The evaluation function in UNHCR dates back to 1973 when the first evaluation post was established with direct reporting responsibility to the High Commissioner. During the decade, evaluative studies were carried out that appeared to have focused on refugee settlement policies and project management systems, but the function was generally viewed with some suspicion and misgivings and was finally dropped in 1979. The following year, pressures from donors resulted in the creation of two separate units concerned with evaluation. The first, the Policy Planning and Research Unit, consisting of three professionals reporting to the High Commissioner, became engaged in "selective evaluations of existing policies and strategies and the orderly accumulation of lessons covering UNHCR's experience". The second, the Project Evaluation Unit, was to introduce something resembling "self evaluation" by focusing on the evaluation of specific projects.

The Policy Planning and Research Unit met with little success partly because of conflicts with other parts of the organisation, partly because of methodological problems, and the Unit was eventually merged with the Management Services function.

The Project Evaluation Unit was more successful. It managed to carry out evaluations using methodologies introduced by Canadian and US Government agencies, and its work came to be accepted as useful and professional. The terms of reference of the unit were broadened and included programme and operational evaluations as well as management studies. In 1990 reporting arrangements were revised, the Unit changed its name to "Central Evaluation Section", and it assumed a more policy and issue-oriented role.

Upon the establishment of the Inspection and Evaluation Service (IES) in early 1995, the Central Evaluation Section was absorbed as a special unit. The Inspection Service was proposed by the High Commissioner in a document dated September 16, 1994¹, and is headed by the Inspector who reports directly to the High Commissioner. A strong emphasis was placed on the proper launching of

the Inspection function as a new management tool. Staffing of the Central Evaluation Unit, at that time, consisted of three officers, i.e. the Co-ordinator and two evaluators. One of the evaluation posts was subsequently transferred to the Inspection function. A second evaluation post was recently eliminated in order to create the post of investigator. At the moment, staffing of the Evaluation Unit consists of only the Co-ordinator's post. Support staff is being shared with the Inspection Unit.

The present function of Central Evaluation Unit in IES is concerned with central level reviews of efficiency, effectiveness and impact of operations. The function is meant to provide feedback on thematic, regional and functional issues that have relevance to the Agency as a whole. Over the years it has provided numerous evaluative studies that have been used to foster learning within the Agency. It is currently understaffed and underfunded and, as the following discussion will bear out, the function requires far greater attention if its potential is to be realised.

The Inspection mandate is to provide a *"comprehensive, systematic and timely assessment of the management of the UNHCR operations and review of UNHCR impact in given countries and regions, focusing particularly on those factors, both internal and external to the organisation, deemed essential to the effective and efficient achievement of organisational objectives"*² The definition of this mandate suggests a management audit orientation, but also one that involves evaluative elements when it speaks about the *review of UNHCR impact*. The inspection service has become a useful management tool, but one could envisage it to become even more relevant by placing more emphasis on a review of achievements against objectives. We consider the inspection function to be an integral part of an holistic evaluation process in the Agency

Central level evaluations should not be confused with so-called "self-evaluations" where line management reviews its own operations through various types of evaluative efforts, with the main purpose of influencing its own planning and implementation process. While there is feedback within line operations, the evaluative nature of it is in a very embryonic state. It is fair to say that a structured and methodical self evaluation function does not currently exist in the Agency.

In the following three chapters of this first part of the study, we will review the current strengths and weaknesses of inspection, central evaluation and self evaluation, in that order. The review will intimate various directions towards improvement without elaborating on them. That will be done in Part II of this study, which will also contain a number of practical recommendations designed to be concrete and action oriented.

Chapter I: The Inspection Function

The inspection function carried out by IES has, in a few short years, become a feedback mechanism frequently used by top management.

Established by the Executive Committee at its forty-fifth session as an oversight mechanism,³ its first Inspector was appointed in early 1995 at a Director level, reporting directly and in the first instance to the High Commissioner.

1.1 Mandate of the Inspection Unit

The inspection function was established, at the special initiative of the High Commissioner, as a response to UNHCR's growing and ever more complicated operations worldwide. The founding document specifically mentioned the magnitude of UNHCR's budget and the (largely voluntary) financing of its operations. The increasingly difficult operational environment was emphasised as

a justification for regular inspections.

The objectives of the Inspection Unit are to perform a management review of a specific UNHCR office or region, as well as Headquarters, with a view to strengthening UNHCR's ability to monitor the quality of management and thus to act as a catalyst for positive change in the organisation.⁴ It is, therefore, an instrument that allows the High Commissioner "to feel the pulse" of field level operations.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the definition of Inspection refers both to "assessment of the management of UNHCR operations" as well as the "review of UNHCR impact in given countries".⁵ It would appear, therefore, that an inspection would be concerned not only with a management audit, but also with a review of results of UNHCR operations. The latter function would be of an evaluative nature and concerned with the measurement of performance against objectives.

1.2 Inspection Process

The methodology of inspection has been carefully outlined in the "Inspection Handbook". This document provides step by step details of the whole inspection process, commencing with the establishment of the annual plan, the preparation for each mission, the conduct during each mission, and the post-mission reporting and follow-up. The Handbook provides the discipline to the whole process, and the guidelines are followed quite precisely by IES staff. Of particular interest are the following procedures:

- The Annual Plan is prepared following a similar consultative procedure as is used for the annual plan for evaluations (see Chapter 2), with the difference that final approval for the plan rests with the High Commissioner, not the Senior Management Committee.
- Each mission is carefully prepared following internal consultation and documentary analysis, as well as the completion of relevant questionnaires by field offices.
- Interviews are structured and focus on both internal factors (e.g. administrative and financial procedures) as well as external factors (e.g. political environment). A large variety of areas of specific concern have been identified for review, ranging from thematic issues such as refugee women, children and the environment, to common concerns regarding health, security, resettlement, education, community services, etc.
- Reporting follows a standard format containing a summary of findings, a plan of action, and a general background of the inspection. The plan of action lists the recommendations, identifies those responsible for implementing the recommendations, and mentions the deadline for action.
- There is a follow-up process, and a compliance mechanism, to monitor the implementation of recommendations.

The High Commissioner is briefed personally by the Inspector after the completion of each inspection. In addition, the applicable Operations Bureau and Desk receive a written report and oral debriefing; a written report is submitted to relevant UNHCR units; specific memoranda are sent to Directors of Operations and Divisions. The complete report is of a confidential nature.

In examining the prescribed process as briefly outlined above, it becomes clear that much thought has gone into the definition of the system. The Inspection Handbook, now in its second version, is very detailed in terms of inspection

coverage (i.e. what issues need to be reviewed), and in terms of inspection methodology (i.e. how the review should take place). Within the context of the current interpretation of the objectives of the inspection service, the methodology is highly appropriate.

1.3 Inspection Focus

The inspection reports are, essentially, management audits. They assess the quality of management. Recommendations are classified into four main categories: "overall management", "operations management"; "administration management", and "other" (oversight and information services). All recommendations are defined in terms of action that needs to be taken by management. A number of overall management recommendations deal with policy and strategy (19% of the total number of recommendations up to the end of 1997). These types of recommendations are primarily concerned with the need to define policy and strategy. They do not regularly analyse the nature of such policy and strategy.

Simply put, the recommendations dealing with policy and strategy are not based on a close measurement of achievements against objectives. Part of the problem is that objectives have not always been identified by the original project/programme planners with a great deal of specificity. Although Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual contains a brief section on the importance of objective setting,⁶ and an Annex in the same Chapter contains sector-activity guidelines and indicators,⁷ there is little evidence that these guidelines and indicators are frequently being used in actual practice. Log Frame Analysis is not part of the culture in UNHCR, although it is now being proposed by the change management team in its ongoing review of the Operations Management System (OMS).

Partly because of the absence of a more rigorous planning system, partly because of an emphasis on management audit, it would seem true to say that inspections do not function as a performance review (which examines the degree to which objectives have been met and identify the causes) but rather focus on an assessment of management competence. A shift towards performance review would enhance the quality of inspection feedback, without in any way undermining the value of a management audit. The relatively modest additional effort required would significantly increase the value for money of the inspection function.

1.4 Inspection Results

Since the commencement of the Inspection Service in the spring of 1995 up to the end of 1997, a total of 55 countries have been inspected and a total of 22 inspection reports have been produced. Close to half of all UNHCR field offices will have been inspected by the end of 1998. The following table summarises the number of inspections, and the countries inspected.

Table 1
Inspection Missions, June 1995 to December 1997

| Operations Bureau | Number of Inspection Reports | Countries Inspected |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Americas | 1 | 5 |
| Asia and Pacific | 6 | 7 |
| CASWANAME | 3 | 9 |
| CEWA | 7 | 11 |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Europe | 3 | 16 |
| Former Yugoslavia | 0 | 1 |
| Great Lakes | 1 | 1 |
| Southern Africa | 1 | 5 |
| Total | 22 | 55 |

Source: IES

Compliance with recommendations initially showed a number of cases that were deemed unsatisfactory. However, the process of monitoring has reportedly resulted in improvements in this regard. Out of the 15 inspections conducted up to the end of 1996, there are two cases where compliance with recommendations is partially satisfactory; the rest are deemed to have a satisfactory record. Results of compliance with respect to some missions conducted in 1997 and all missions conducted in 1998 are still pending.

1.5 Link with Internal Audit

UNHCR's internal auditors report to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in New York. More specifically, the Chief of the OIOS/UNHCR Audit Section reports directly to the Under-Secretary General for Internal Oversight Services. The relationship between OIOS and UNHCR is outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding dated April 29, 1997.⁸ The audit function carried out by OIOS is "intended as a management tool to assist the High Commissioner in fulfilling her management functions as well as an oversight mechanism"⁹

The OIOS' Internal Audit Division conducts independent audits in conformity with generally accepted common auditing standards. It reviews, evaluates and reports on the soundness, adequacy and application of systems, procedures and related internal controls. It focuses on strictly financial matters, compliance with rules and regulations, and the reliability of the reporting system. It does not provide comprehensive audits which are more evaluative in nature and look for the operational significance that lies behind financial statistics.

The High Commissioner is, therefore, informed by two different audit functions, an audit function carried out by OIOS that focuses on financial matters, rules and regulations and reporting, and a management audit function carried out by the inspection service of IES. While the general relationship between these two services is subject to the afore mentioned general Memorandum of Understanding, the day-to day relationship is not. There is some, but not frequent, consultation between OIOS and IES, and this contact has worked well because of the positive relationship that exists between the two parties. Both are represented on the Oversight Committee, periodically convened by IES.

Nevertheless, because of the potential that exists for overlap, the scope for complementarity that is inherent in the two operations, the need for consultation on annual programmes and strategies, as well as the need to keep each other informed regularly with respect to results, it might be useful to subject this relationship to a more formal process. This could be accomplished through more regular meetings, and an exchange of letters outlining the day to day relationship

Chapter II: The Central Evaluation Function

2.1 Staffing of the Central Evaluation Unit

he Central Evaluation Unit is seriously understaffed. Currently there is one position in the Unit at the P-5 level, i.e. the Evaluation Co-ordinator's position. It is a specialist post, i.e. a post that is suitable only for a person with the specialist qualifications required, and the incumbent is not subject to rotations like most other (non-specialist) staff are. The only other professional position in the Evaluation Unit was recently abandoned in order to create a post of investigator. There are no other professional positions in the Evaluation Unit. Support positions are shared with the Inspection Unit of IES.

A single evaluation position for an Agency with some 5400 staff world wide, with field offices numbering in excess of 120, and a total operating budget in excess of US \$1 billion, working under most trying conditions in collaboration with countless partners world wide, is not sufficient.

It might be argued that total professional staff in the IES more than makes up for the staffing deficiency observed in the Evaluation Unit. In addition to the latter Unit, the IES consists of its Director at the D-2 level, three professionals in the Inspection Unit, one Executive Assistant who also participates in inspections, and one professional in the newly created Investigation Unit.

Total professionals in the IES, therefore, number seven, including the Director. However, the tasks of these various Units are quite different from each other, and it cannot be justifiably maintained that these staff are involved in efforts normally associated with the evaluation function,. While it is true that the Inspection Unit provides an evaluative type of feedback concentrating on efficiency issues, its current purpose is not necessarily to learn from experience, neither to measure the achievement of objectives, nor to offer recommendations of a planning, strategic or policy nature . It represents a tool designed to control and assess the quality of the management of operations. Its focus is narrow, i.e. it provides a management audit for specific operations. It is a control mechanism, not an instrument that fosters learning. The new Investigation Unit seems designed to perform a policing function and has no or little relation to evaluation at all.

It is, therefore, true to say that UNHCR's evaluation function is currently carried out by only one full time officer, the Co-ordinator, who has access to UNHCR staff members in need of placement for participation in evaluation exercises (the advantages and disadvantages of which will be discussed below). A comparison with other UN organisations is provided in the following table.

Table 2

Central Evaluation Staffing of UN Organisations in October 1998

| Name of Organisation | Professional Staff | Support Staff |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| UNHCR | (1) Inspector (heading both Inspection and Evaluation) (1) Evaluation Co-ordinator | (3) Support Staff shared with Inspection Service |
| WFP | (1) Director (2) Senior Officers (4) Evaluation Officers | (3) Support Staff |
| | | |

| | | |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| UNDP | (1) Director | (4) Support staff |
| | (1) Deputy Director | |
| | (3) Evaluation Specialists | |

Source: UNHCR, WFP, UNDP

In order to understand why one co-ordinating officer is insufficient, it would be useful to look at a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for the Evaluation Unit. A proposed WBS has been prepared and appears in Annex 1. It has been defined on the basis of activities carried out by central evaluation services in other organisations (bilateral and multilateral), and on the basis of the special conditions prevailing within UNHCR. A central evaluation service plays a key role in a learning organisation. It is engaged in both formative evaluations (which take place during the course of implementation) and summative evaluations (which take place after completion of operations). It is principally concerned with issues of direct relevance to the organisation as a whole, but would also assist in evaluative work important to specific operational units, with due consideration for lessons that would be applicable to the rest of the organisation. Its main function is to allow the organisation to learn from experience, thus influencing policies, strategies, plans and implementation.

In looking at the Work Breakdown Structure, we see that the role for a Central Evaluation Unit can be broken down into six main components, each one of which consisting of a number of main tasks. Thus, the Unit is to conduct Agency-wide evaluations of different types, participate in other evaluations (undertaken by Bureaux, partners or other organisations), become the focal point for evaluation methodology within the Agency, become actively involved in the formulation of policy and strategy recommendations, play a key role in the dissemination of evaluation findings, and play a role in monitoring the adoption of change following accepted recommendations.

These tasks are beyond the capabilities of a central evaluation service that consists of just one single officer.

2.2 Types and Quality of Evaluation Reports

In order to obtain a first impression of the central evaluation activities within UNHCR, it might be informative to start with a review of its products. Evaluation reports produced since the early 1980s have often been of useful, and at times hard hitting, quality and cover a wide variety of important issues. The scope of topics that have been (will be) evaluated during 1997 and 1998 appears in the following table:

Table 3

Central Level Evaluations

| Evaluations conducted in 1997 | Evaluations completed / planned in 1998 |
|--|--|
| Staff stress and security: a management challenge for UNHCR | Review of UNHCR's assistance to older refugees |
| Review of UNHCR's phase out strategies: case studies in selected countries of origin | UNHCR's mass information activities |

| | |
|--|--|
| Refugee security in camps | The problem of access to land and ownership in repatriation operations |
| Review of UNHCR's implementing arrangements | Evaluation of UNHCR training activities |
| Review of UNHCR's project staff arrangements | Review of UNHCR's Mali/Niger repatriation efforts |
| Evaluation of UNHCR's efforts on behalf of children. | Review of policy compliance in UNHCR on women, children and environment |
| Review of UNHCR's refugee education activities | UNHCR's rehabilitation activities in the Great Lakes Region |
| WFP/UNHCR Joint Evaluation Mission. Emergency food assistance to returnees, refugees, displaced persons and other war-affected populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina | Report of the Tripartite (UNICEF / UNHCR / WFP) study of the Great Lakes emergency operation |
| | Implementation of UNHCR's Strategy in the European Union |
| | Evaluation of the UNHCR Housing Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina |

Source: IES

What can we say about this list of evaluations? In the first place, the type of topics that have been examined would appear to be very much suited to the role that a central evaluation service should play. The topics are, by and large, concerned with policy and strategy issues of relevance to the Agency as a whole. Reports identify strengths and weaknesses of implementation that have implications not just for one specific refugee operation, but have general application across the board. Certain studies were performed in collaboration with other organisations and were more focused on geographic regions. The titles of some of the studies would suggest a rather ambitious scope requiring substantial resources. Both staff resources as well as financial resources, however, suggest that certain compromises had to be made. As will be discussed more fully below, because of a lack of skilled staff to plan, organise and carry out more complex assignments, the Unit has had to avoid more costly methodologies that might have offered gains in profundity and insights.

Secondly, a review of these documents reveals that they contain material of importance to the HCR. The views presented are often well reflected. Depth of analysis may sometimes be uneven, often depending on the author and methodology used. Findings are by and large interesting and would seem useful for management in terms of defining overall policy, solution strategies and project planning. While the reports can be critical at times, the criticism is a healthy and constructive one, attributes that are essential to learning from experience. With the recent lifting of restrictions regarding their distribution, central level evaluations could provide useful information to the Executive Committee that might enhance the latter's understanding of the challenges facing HCR and thus allow informed guidance in relevant areas. Generally it would seem that the Evaluation Unit has been creative in coping with a small budget and very limited staff. It has opted, out of necessity, for a low cost approach that nevertheless managed feedback on essential issues.

The format of these reports generally allows a quick review of the essentials by top management. They all contain summaries of findings, and a list of recommendations. They appear less standardised in terms of defining lessons learned. In certain cases lessons constitute a special section of the report and are suitably enlightening. In certain other cases lessons are omitted but could possibly be deduced from recommendations. Sometimes lessons appear under different headings such as "Key Operating Principles", "Fundamental Issues", or "Key Programme Issues". The idea of identifying best practices, a relatively new thought stressed by HCR's change management team, has not yet been adopted in the drafting of these reports. Shortcomings in the standardisation of reports complicates a dissemination and feedback strategy. As will be discussed later, a more clearly directed feedback strategy will need to be devised.

2.3 Cost Efficiency

The total budget for outsourcing by the Central Evaluation Unit for 1997 was US \$240,000, and for 1998 it was the same. This amounts to an average outsourcing budget per study of US \$34,000 for 1997 and US \$24,000 for 1998. In 1997, only US \$184,000 was used, showing an average cost per study of some US \$23,000. Considering the scope of work normally required in conducting central level evaluations, and the staff resources normally applied in evaluation units of other bilateral and multilateral organisations, (see the discussion on staffing above) this is very cheap indeed. There are a number of ways in which the average outsourcing cost per study has been kept low:

- Occasionally attempts are made by the Unit to launch studies in collaboration with other stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, Governments, or other UN organisations). This collaborative approach would, of course, significantly reduce the overall costs to HCR. It may also provide interesting new approaches and viewpoints. It is, therefore, not only a cost efficient but also an effective way of learning from experience. In looking at the 1997 and 1998 evaluation programme, the practice of joint evaluations has been limited and there would be good justification to do more.
- Much use is also made of HCR staff currently between assignments and temporarily attached to IES. This practice has constituted one of the main reasons why, with a relatively large number of studies each year and a very limited outsourcing budget, the Unit has nevertheless been able to provide important evaluative work. Experience with staff awaiting placement has not been uniformly positive. Although such staff are not financed from the outsourcing budget, salaries are paid from the Administration Budget of the Unit.
- At various times, retired former HCR staff (and staff now employed elsewhere) are invited to perform the study. This type of recruitment tends to avoid a steep learning curve (hence reducing costs) and could be less expensive than outside private sector consultants. But it might also bring pre-conceived ideas to the task. The advantages and disadvantages of using former HCR staff should be weighed for each type of evaluation contemplated.
- In addition, the design as well as the methodology used, may be adjusted to allow the study to take place within a certain budget. One cost cutting device, for example, is that no full fledged evaluation assessments have been carried out. (An evaluation assessment is an accepted methodology in certain bilateral evaluation services. They allow the identification of issues and propose study approaches before the actual commencement of certain highly complex studies). The preparation of a detailed evaluation framework, (which systematically identifies the main issues, sub-issues,

indicators, sources of information and means to obtain such information, see Annex 4), as well as the preparation of the various information gathering tools to be used, is vital as a pre-requisite for a well functioning unit, but has been inhibited by limited financial resources.

- Lastly, low budgetary resources tend to dictate the type of study that can be reasonably undertaken and the scope of such studies that would be possible. A number of studies were performed by single individuals, or sometimes two individuals, who tackled highly complex issues that, under normal budgetary circumstances, would require significantly more financial and staff resources. With budgetary constraints one is forced to either reduce the scope of the study, avoid the more complex issues, or both. The current low budget would not allow for the more comprehensive studies one could envisage. For example, a study to evaluate the environmental impact of UNHCR's world-wide activities (which would be timely and pertinent) would not be possible without heavy infusion of additional funds. A thorough analysis of performance and capacity of partners (again very timely) would similarly require substantial resources.

It is difficult to judge the right level of financial resources required to carry out an annual program of central-level evaluations. Comparisons with other organisations are problematic because of the different nature of studies involved, the level of details required, varying policies with respect to outsourcing, joint exercises, the existence of special trust funds, the possibility of dedicated contributions, etc.

Yet, under normal circumstances one may observe a few correlations that could provide guidance. One normally expects a positive correlation between the quality of an evaluation product (e.g. the analytical quality, the recommendations, the lessons learned) and the long term impact it may have on operations. One would also expect a positive correlation between the number and quality of professional staff with sufficient financial resources at their disposition, and the quality of an evaluation product. It follows that staff and financial resources applied to evaluation play an important role in the impact evaluation ultimately has.

Within this context, it might be useful to make a comparison with the World Food Programme, an organisation comparable to UNHCR in terms of its mandate. Excluding the so-called "self-evaluations", the following comparative figures have been obtained for both UNHCR and WFP:

Table 4
Comparative Evaluation Budget Figures for 1997

| Indicators | UNHCR | WFP |
|---|---|--|
| (A) Total budget of Agency as a whole | US \$1.2 billion | US \$1.28 billion |
| (B) Total budget for central evaluation service | US \$600,000 (based on approximate share in total IES admin budget plus outsourcing budget) | US \$2,4 million (includes central evaluation only, i.e. total budget of Office of Evaluation) |
| (C) Total budget for outsourcing | US \$184,000 | US \$209,000 |
| Proportion (b:a) | 0.05% | 0.19% |

Source: UNHCR and WFP

The table shows that the proportionate amount budgeted for the respective evaluation services in 1997 was substantially lower for UNHCR than it was for WFP, while both Agencies had total budgets which are almost identical. If we calculate the proportion of the central evaluation budget against the Agency's total budget, we see a significant difference between the two: 0.05 % for UNHCR and 0.19 % for WFP.

Funds made available for outsourcing of the evaluation activities (i.e. hiring outside expertise) requires some comment. UNHCR's outsourcing budget in 1997 was US \$184,000. For WFP it was US \$209,000. These two figures should be judged against Agency staff in existing positions available to perform evaluations. For UNHCR there were two professional evaluation positions in 1997, since reduced to one. For WFP there were six professional evaluation positions able to participate in evaluations themselves (thus reducing the need for outside expertise). Under these circumstances a substantially larger outsourcing budget would have seemed reasonable for UNHCR.

We conclude that UNHCR's central evaluation budget is extremely low, and inadequate for organisational needs. The unit has been able to stay within budget through various means outlined above. With a severely limited budget, combined with diminishing staff resources, it became increasingly necessary to adopt practices that have the potential to limit the effectiveness of the evaluation exercise. In brief, *the low budget of the central evaluation unit, combined with severely limited staff resources, tend to prescribe both the type of studies that can be undertaken, as well as the manner in which these studies can be carried out.* Ultimately, an insufficient budget diminishes the learning that could take place within an organisation.

2.4 Methodological Approach

Methodology is concerned with the overall cycle of an evaluation, i.e. evaluation activities dealing with planning, conducting and disseminating. Methodological questions are concerned with the who, why, where, when and how of an evaluation. The question as to who should conduct an evaluation deals with issues such as the need for impartiality, the importance of technical competence and the advantages of fresh and creative ideas. The questions why, where and when of an evaluation deal with issues of need. Important here is the way in which an annual plan for evaluations is put together, what the criteria are for the selection of evaluations that need to be done, if and how stakeholders were consulted before the plan was made up, etc. The question of how is concerned with the actual process of conducting an evaluation and what use is made of the product. We will comment briefly on each of these broad issues.

2.4.1 Who Carries Out Evaluations

In order to find out who the evaluators were during the last few years

(including the ones currently engaged), a table has been prepared that shows the degree of involvement of the main categories of individuals. This table appears as Annex 2. The table excludes the management activities of staff of the central Evaluation Unit, but does show their participation in field work, data collection and editing. The table distinguishes between four different types of (former and current) HCR staff, i.e. those seconded to IES while waiting for placement, HCR staff in regular posts, former HCR staff now working as consultants, and retired HCR staff working as part time consultants. In addition, the table identifies private consultants without a previous link to HCR, as well as staff or consultants of other

agencies of governments.

The key impressions of this table are as follows. Individual evaluations have been performed by a one or two person evaluation team with management back-up and often editorial support by the Central Unit. Very frequent use has been made of individuals familiar with UNHCR approaches and practices. Of the four HCR categories identified, people awaiting placement have been used most frequently. Current staff members in existing positions have been used sparingly. Former HCR staff now acting as consultants have been used on four different occasions in the past two years. Retired HCR staff have been used especially for editing purposes (it concerns one person primarily), but also to conduct studies on three different occasions. Outside consultants without familiarity with HCR have been used only twice (not counting joint evaluations). Consultants representing other agencies or governments became involved in only three different cases.

One may raise a number of questions. As was intimated earlier, budgetary constraints have necessitated the heavy emphasis on evaluators with HCR ties, particularly those waiting to be reassigned to other posts. Has this emphasis benefited the quality of the evaluation findings and recommendations? Do the advantages of familiarity with HCR operations outweigh the risk of bringing to the job certain points of view ingrained in HCR traditions and ways of doing things? Does the emphasis on evaluators with HCR ties preclude the introduction of new and fresh ideas, different visions?

While there may be cost savings for the Evaluation Unit in using HCR staff awaiting placement, there is the question of experience. Not all such staff have necessarily the experience, analytical ability, and methodological know-how that is required in carrying out evaluations. In fact, it is most likely that methodological know-how would be virtually non-existent in such cases. As a consequence of the above, experience with such staff has been mixed. Their use has resulted in both very good products and others that are less impressive.

The use of outside consultants could be a mixed blessing, but it is certainly adopted by central evaluation services in many organisations. The Office of Evaluation (OEDE) of the World Food Programme, for example, increasingly outsources evaluations to experienced consultants, with OEDE's role focused on the management and supervision of missions and the analysis and presentation of their results. In difficult or politically sensitive situations, an OEDE officer will lead the mission.

There is the initial uncertainty of quality of outside consultants, and there may be a cost constraint. On the other hand, there is the advantage of new approaches and insights that could have a fertilising effect on HCR and contribute to its learning. The development of a roster of consultants with proven ability could provide a useful supplement to current evaluation expertise in the IES.

The advantages of joint evaluations have been intimated before. While it is true that such joint evaluations will need to be managed closely to ensure useful results, there could also be considerable advantages in terms of shared costs, innovative design, comprehensive scope, consideration from different vantage points, "buy in" and learning from participants. One could envisage a considerably increased usage of evaluation/technical experts from governments, partners and other agencies in joint efforts. Although no exhaustive survey has been done, there are indications that donors would welcome an opportunity to participate in evaluations that would cover areas in which their bilateral programs have an interest.

2.4.2 Annual Evaluation Plan

With respect to the "why", "where" and "when" questions, one of the key issues is concerned with the choice of subject matter. The process of establishing an annual evaluation plan in HCR is participatory in nature. The following steps are taken:

1. Identification of the principal issues facing the organisation. These issues are determined on the basis of interviews with Bureau Directors, an analysis of recent speeches, analytical studies, donor comments, views of CDR etc.
2. Preparation of a preliminary list of topics for submission to UNHCR staff, including Heads of Divisions, Heads of Bureaux and other staff members.
3. Face to face meetings with concerned UNHCR staff to discuss priorities
4. Review of a long list of topics with the Head of IES in order to determine the key areas that need attention.
5. Determination of a short list of topics, weighing both the importance of the topic to UNHCR, the importance to specific stakeholders in Bureaux of the issues, and the availability of resources.
6. Discussion with the High Commissioner of the selected topics, which might result in changes.
7. Submission of the final list to the Senior Management Committee for approval.

This process is, in itself, an appropriate one. It is participatory and gives everybody a chance to voice an opinion. A number of questions can be raised. In the first place: "How pro-active has this process been?". Given the fact that (a) the process results in the elaboration of the first long list of proposed topics, and (b) it includes the right to select from topics suggested by the Bureaux and Divisions, the process reflects IES' authority as an oversight mechanism. This selection process contains, therefore, a pro-active element.

Is this degree of pro-activity sufficient? Another dimension of exercising influence over the selection of topics can be envisaged. Essentially, the results of this consultative process very much rely on the opinion of others, and it is difficult to detect criteria employed in drafting the original list and making this final selection. If there are such criteria, are they indicative of a long-term evaluation strategy? Or are they merely the flavour of the day? It seems clear that, in deciding on topics, the Central Evaluation Unit is sensitive to the key issues *currently* facing the organisation. But this sensitivity does not necessarily serve a long term evaluation plan, a plan designed to test the strategic thrusts of the Agency (as they appear, for example in the UNHCR 2000 document).

A body of findings, accumulated from different evaluative studies over the years, focusing on specific policy concerns, may help formulate policy more clearly and convincingly than the results of several "one of a kind" studies could. A long term evaluation plan, carefully reflecting long term Agency strategies, is something that might give guidance to the definition of annual evaluation plans. There is no evidence that such a long term evaluation plan currently exists.

2.4.3 How are evaluations conducted

The "how" question has been the subject of a large body of literature on evaluation methodology, which is growing every day. Attempts to create a science in this area are laudable, but in the end probably not very realistic. Evaluation will always retain certain creative elements. It will, in the final analysis, have to rely on the overall experience of an evaluator, as well as on analytical

skills, a quality that is difficult to teach.

Nevertheless, there has been impressive, and useful, progress over the years in the development of how one goes about doing an evaluation, progress that has substantially validated the function as such. For example, a key development some thirty years ago was the creation of the Logical Framework Analysis in project planning that can serve as a basis for a systematic review of the achievement of objectives.¹⁰ Another noteworthy, much more recent, development is the current emphasis on short term and long term results rather than outputs. This emphasis more accurately measures the effectiveness and impact of an activity, and assesses the risk at each step of the result chain. In this way project staff manage not only the intended outputs but also the identified risks associated with the achievement of longer term results.¹¹ Important to mention is also the use of an evaluation matrix that provides a systematic approach to individual evaluation efforts by identifying the main issues, sub-issues, key indicators, sources of data, and methods of data collection (see Annex 4). Of much practical use is also the preparation of an evaluation work plan prior to the commencement of a study. A work plan introduces a degree of standardisation in the approach (e.g. basic reporting format, a pre-determined dissemination strategy, identification of expertise required, an evaluation matrix, etc.) and allows better management control over the work of the evaluation team.

The Central Evaluation Unit is aware of these methodological developments, and fully recognises their utility. Constraints in both budgetary allocations and staff resources, however, have prevented the full application of such methodologies. Important in this regard is also the fact that planning on the basis of a Logical Framework Analysis is not an accepted practice in UNHCR (as the OMS change management group has also pointed out in its various analytical papers¹²). The absence of an LFA approach to planning seriously complicates matters for any evaluation.¹³

Given the current resource constraints, a very good effort has been made in managing the central evaluation function. Evaluation approaches have been guided and supervised. Some degree of standardisation in the presentation of findings has been accomplished, and evaluation results contain useful material for learning purposes. It is important, however, to acknowledge the potential for a more dynamic, forward looking evaluation function, for which certain changes will be required. Specifically, more formal evaluation methodologies will need to be introduced as soon as possible in order to facilitate the management and control of the work.

There is a clear need for the drafting of a manual that provides standards for evaluation (of a standard comparable to the Handbook of the Inspection Services), and outlines key relationships between evaluation and other systems and procedures in the Agency. The evaluation effort will benefit from a rigorous application of such standards, and a clear identification of linkages will nourish feedback efforts. In addition, with the possible enhancement of a self-evaluation function in the Bureaux, significant methodological guidance will be required. Such guidance would be based on a manual that provides Agency wide evaluation standards. Guidance would also require an evaluation training module that should be prepared to introduce a systematic evaluation training process in the Agency.

2.5 Dissemination of Evaluation Findings

In speaking about the transparency of the evaluation function, one has to distinguish between public transparency and internal transparency.

2.5.1 Public transparency

Central level evaluations involve the type of studies that are of importance to the organisation as a whole. They generally consist of sectoral and thematic studies, often crossing geographic boundaries and line responsibilities. They may also include, normally upon request by line management, certain important comprehensive project or programme evaluations that are summative in nature, conducted after termination of the activities, or programme phases, to be assessed.¹⁴ The purpose of these central-level evaluations is to measure effectiveness in relation to relevant policy goals, strategy objectives, solutions for groups of concerns, technical standards, etc. and are designed to provide recommendations, suggest policy and strategy, define lessons learned and identify best practices.

Central level evaluations are intended to be objective and de-personalised studies that could teach lessons not only to UNHCR staff, but to the world at large, including partners, governments and other institutions. The dissemination of these reports has been the subject of much debate and controversy inside and outside the Agency. Traditionally, UNHCR has viewed central evaluations as a sensitive internal matter. It was felt by some that contentious issues should be a matter for management to resolve and should not be made public. As a result, the evaluations produced by the central unit were restricted to UNHCR staff. Synopsis reports were produced for the Executive Committee but members of this Committee had no access to the full document. Serious reservations about this restriction have been expressed by members of the EXCOM. During the last EXCOM meeting in October 1998, it was announced that central level evaluation reports will henceforth be made available to any member government requesting them.

It may be useful to see what other organisations do in this regard. The WFP, UNDP, UNICEF, and the OIOS Central Evaluation Unit in New York all make their full evaluation reports available to governing bodies. The WFP provides its governing body with summaries of its evaluations, but makes the full reports available upon request. This is now the policy adopted by UNHCR.

Full disclosure, involving the highlighting of successes, the recognition of problems, the definition of lessons and best practices, and the recommendations of a policy and strategic nature, could only serve to instil a measure of confidence in the Agency's willingness to learn. The lifting of restrictions on distribution should facilitate and encourage the feedback flow to partners. Partners who participated in a joint evaluation with UNHCR receive a copy of the final report. In certain cases, the final report may be forwarded to other potentially interested NGOs. But generally, there was not a full sharing of findings. Now that the reports are no longer deemed restricted, one could adopt a more transparent dissemination strategy.

As will be discussed more fully in Part II of this report, there is a case to be made to maintain restrictions on the distribution of self evaluations. The latter are principally designed for management to guide day-to-day operations of projects and programmes. They are formative in nature and support the iterative approach often required in project management. Such restrictions should be lifted, however, where self evaluations are summative in nature, i.e. end-of-project/phase or impact evaluations.

2.5.2 Internal transparency.

What happens internally to an evaluation study once it is completed? A copy is

first sent to the Senior Management Committee for discussion. The Committee often suggests a certain distribution. A copy is sent to the principal stakeholder, e.g. the desk or functional unit. Other potentially interested parties are identified and will receive a copy, e.g. selected field representatives. Synopses are produced for wider internal and external distribution. The report is included in the IES internal data system, a mechanism that provides an inventory of IES reports, recommendations and follow-up activities.

This basic distribution process seems sound as a very first step in the dissemination of findings. In principle, everyone in UNHCR has potential access to study results. Whether or not this distribution process, by itself, serves as an effective means for learning and decision making is a question that needs to be analysed more carefully.

During interviews with UNHCR staff a number of thoughts were expressed about dissemination and feedback. Because of an overload of information that reaches the desks regularly, the reports are not being studied as intensively as might have been intended. Desk officers may neglect sending copies of the report to the field. Copies of reports do not necessarily reach the partners unless they were involved in the evaluation themselves. While there is scope for distribution of hard copy, staff officers feel that they would benefit most from an electronic retrieval system that would allow them creative searches along subject matter using key word and codes. The Senior Management Committee may endorse recommendations appearing in the reports, and indicate action that needs to be taken. But UNHCR staff questioned how effective the reports have been in influencing policy for the Agency as a whole. There is a need for a well designed process that would allow systematic dissemination of evaluation results, and a comprehensive feedback system that would provide internal linkages between evaluation and the users of evaluation results.

The Central Evaluation Unit is aware of these concerns and is trying to address them. For example, evaluation studies have been put on the Agency's intranet, and plans are to design a retrieval system based on subject matter that can be cross referenced. Report syntheses are produced and distributed to allow for easier absorption by interested parties. But in spite of these and other innovations, there would appear to be room for significant further enhancement of the dissemination and feedback function in a way that would stimulate Agency-wide learning.

If we look at the experience of other organisations, we learn one important lesson in this area. No matter what resources are made available for evaluation, and no matter how brilliant the evaluations turn out to be, the potential benefits will not be realised without a powerful and ongoing dissemination and feedback mechanism. The inevitable conclusion of this lesson is that the enhancement of evaluation requires an equal emphasis on dissemination and feedback. The relevant systems are still in a very elementary stage in UNHCR. With the appointment of additional staff to the Central Evaluation Unit, the establishment of a viable dissemination and feedback strategy should become a priority.

2.5.3 Linkage to policy making

If central evaluation studies are to serve their purpose, it will be necessary not only to provide full and easy access to their findings, but also to make sure that they actively contribute to policy making. At times, individual evaluations have served a useful purpose. Annex 3 provides examples of how specific studies have been used. Thus, evaluations have been applied as working documents for strategic planning meetings, as background documents to establish specific guidelines, as a basis for the preparation of publications or speeches targeted at

an external audience, etc. The usefulness of such evaluations resulted directly from specific requirements for, and interests of top management in the issue at hand. But there has not been a conscious and directed effort to ensure that evaluation findings, in combination with policy research, were translated into clear policy statements for top management to deliberate.

In addition to the practical use that has been made of evaluative studies, the Central Evaluation Unit also has started a follow-up mechanism that monitors if, and how, accepted recommendations are being implemented.

Definition of policy is not only dependent on the quality and content of individual studies concerned. It is also, and especially so, a function of a process conducive to policy development, a process that currently only exists in embryonic form. Of key importance in this process is the interest that top management takes in the outcome of evaluations. At the moment, individual evaluations are submitted to the Senior Management Committee for commentary. The report does not go to the Policy Committee, nor is IES represented on this committee. There are no annual, or multi-year, round-ups of evaluation findings that synthesise key findings for discussion by top management. In short, various key elements of a policy development process are missing. One could envisage such a process as follows:

- The process starts with the formulation of a long term (e.g. five years) evaluation plan. Such a plan needs to be sensitive to the information requirements of management. It needs to be based on HCR's long term vision and subsequent shifts in strategic priorities. It will be designed to test the validity of this vision and these priorities over time.
- The process continues with the formulation of the annual evaluation plan. This plan needs to be consistent with the long term evaluation strategy mentioned above and should serve to provide management with feedback on how its vision is being applied in practical reality each year. It should serve an iterative function, i.e. add topical issues of a short term nature and new issues to be incorporated into a long term framework.
- Of key importance in the process is the recognition of the organic link that exist between evaluation and policy research, a recognition that may need to be expressed through an organisational structure conducive to close collaboration between these two functions. The definition of policy proposals can be envisaged as a joint responsibility between the central evaluation function and the policy research function whereby the former contributes feedback from the field and the latter complements these findings through further research.
- It would seem important to submit joint results of evaluations and policy research to a policy making body at the highest level, i.e. the Policy Committee. Submissions to the Policy Committee would include both results of individual findings as well as retrospective views (e.g. annually as well as every five years) of accumulated and synthesised findings of an evaluative and research nature. Such reviews would be designed to propose policy and would constitute major policy documents for the Agency.
- Decisions made by the Policy Committee would require follow up. In order to enforce policy decisions, a focal point needs to exist with authority to refine, monitor and report. Such a focal point could be envisaged for an organisational structure that combines both policy research and central level evaluation.

Chapter III: Self Evaluation In UNHCR

3.1 The Concept of Self Evaluation

The term "self evaluation" refers to a critical examination by line management of its own performance against its own objectives. It is an occasion for line management to take a look at what has been achieved, what the strengths and weaknesses have been, and what adjustments are required. It can be designed to identify lessons that need to be applied to ongoing operations, i.e. so-called "formative" evaluations. It can also be designed to review the impact of completed operations to identify best practices and lessons that could be applied in the future elsewhere, i.e. so-called "summative" evaluations. Self evaluations focus on very specific operations, whereas central level evaluations tend to be more global and cross cutting in nature, dealing with themes, sectors, and geographic regions. Self evaluations are the responsibility of line management, whereas central level evaluations are performed by an outside service.

We may distinguish among a number of self evaluative instruments. Some of these are the more traditional mid-term performance reviews, strategic reviews and end-of-project evaluations, each with their own special focus and interests. But there are also other review activities of an evaluative nature, which are less subject to the traditional evaluation methodologies. These could include monitoring efforts (e.g. Situation Reports, Project Monitoring Reports and Sub-Project Monitoring Reports), co-ordinating meetings, special conferences and even "trouble shooting" efforts designed to examine specific functional areas in need of improvement. The importance of monitoring, and its relation to evaluation, is well described by the OMS change management team:[15](#)

"The difference between evaluation and monitoring is essentially one of intensity, immediacy and depth reflected in viewpoint, timing, coverage and focus. Monitoring in itself includes an element of continuous evaluation and a readiness to identify needs and opportunities for more in-depth evaluation where a more fundamental reassessment may be called for".

Self evaluations very much depend on the quality of planning that goes into the project or programme in question. Without a clear indication of objectives, and in the absence of objectively verifiable indicators (i.e. key result indicators), the self evaluation exercise may quickly degenerate into a lukewarm event that may succeed in analysing the process of management, but may fail in analysing the purpose of management. In looking at the current condition of self evaluation in UNHCR, it might be appropriate, therefore, to first review the planning process in the Agency.

3.2 Planning in UNHCR

The purpose and nature of planning, the need for objective-setting, and other areas related to planning, appear in Chapter Four of the UNHCR Manual. A set of sector activity guidelines and indicators appear in Annex 8 of this Manual. There is general awareness within UNHCR of the importance of planning. The need for planning is also incorporated into various training programmes of the Agency.[16](#) Project Delphi recognised the importance of strengthening the Agency's planning process. Most importantly, the OMS change management team is presently deeply involved in designing a new planning system for the Agency, with potentially far reaching consequences.

The reason for this current focus on the planning system is that the old system (with certain notable exceptions especially in the case of appeal documents for special operations) has not served the Agency well. While the UNHCR Manual

provides good insights into the concept of planning, there is no prescribed methodology that should be followed. The OMS change management team has identified ten areas that should be improved. They appear in Box 1 below:

Box 1

**Planning in UNHCR
Areas for Improvement**

- *Integration of protection into operations planning*
- *Ensuring comprehensiveness of the UNHCR response, greater solutions orientation and institutionalisation of the situational approach*
- *Clearer rationale and justification for UNHCR involvement and commitment of resources*
- *Reorientation of UNHCR operations towards results and impact. rather than inputs and activities*
- *Clarifying the overall impact and combined cost of operational, staffing and admin support requirements*
- *Better-managed planning processes and partner involvement in operations planning*
- *Better planning and co-ordination tools for operations managers, planners and teams*
- *Better-planned, and better-managed implementation*
- *Technical soundness of operations*
- *Better-planned Headquarters support to operations.*

Source: OMS Change Management Team

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to go into a detailed discussion of each one of these points. They all contain elements that, once implemented, would significantly facilitate self evaluation. In as far as the self evaluation function is concerned, of particular importance are the innovations designed to introduce:

- **a "Solutions Strategy" to planning, replacing the Country Operations Plan.** The solutions planning strategy is designed to resolve the artificiality of country borders in refugee situations, and does away with the limitations presented by the annual planning horizon. The artificiality that the present planning system creates by focusing on the yearly programming cycle and the yearly funding cycle, compounded by the insufficiency of focusing on a country or site rather than the "situation", discourages long term thinking, and might result in repetition of project activities. The limitations of such a planning system present serious difficulties to the self evaluation function.
- **the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) approach to planning.** The LFA provides a matrix that logically dissects all elements of a plan with a clear indication of indicators of achievement. It serves as a basis in preparing the issues that need to be reviewed during an evaluation and, as such, is a key instrument. While the LFA is an important starting point, it should be remembered that it is not static in nature. Objectives may change over time. Hence, indicators may change, and critical assumptions may change calling for a different approach to risk management. Nevertheless, the absence of clearly enunciated objectives in a plan tends to make self evaluation more of an haphazardous affair. A carefully worked out LFA not only provides the necessary discipline to the planning effort, but also offers

an anchor to the self evaluation function.

- **an emphasis on results, rather than outputs.** There is a growing recognition internationally that outputs only represent a means to an end. Donor agencies such as US AID and CIDA put a strong emphasis on Results Based Management (RBM). Planning should be concerned with results. Management should be concerned with results. Therefore, evaluation should be concerned with results. In actual practice, this means that evaluation should not only be reviewing output indicators, but also, and especially, indicators related to objectives, i.e. outcome indicators. Focus on the latter would constitute the main challenge for self evaluation.
- **the introduction of a participatory planning approach with partners.** The advantages of such an approach have been well documented in the literature, particularly literature dealing with community development. A participatory approach creates a sense of joint ownership that leads to an increased feeling of responsibility, willingness to collaborate and participate in co-ordination activities, and, generally, an attitude of co-operation. Most importantly from the point of view of self evaluation, a participatory planning approach can lead to joint evaluations where parties would be inclined to give up defensive attitudes and willingly submit to a joint learning experience.

The required improvements identified above would greatly facilitate the self evaluation process. There is one very practical improvement that should be introduced: **The need for evaluation should be incorporated into the planning system at the very beginning.**

Evaluation will need to be built into the plan right from the start. This means three things. In the first place, a budget for self evaluation will need to be set aside at the planning stage. This budget will need to be based on a general notion of the scope and design of the evaluation required. In the second place, the basic outline of the self evaluation methodology, scope and design should be defined in the planning document. This includes identification of key indicators and expertise required. Thirdly, planning documents should include an indication that lessons from previous experience have been applied to the plan. At the moment, planning in UNHCR does not consider findings from relevant experience in a systematic manner (the exception is the revised Country Operations Plan format introduced by the OMS team in March 1998).

The proposed planning process as summarised above, does not yet exist. Self evaluation will be difficult unless the planning system supports it. Difficulties can, however, be somewhat mitigated by making an extra effort in the preparation of the respective self evaluation work plans. In other words, the need for changes in the planning process should not be used as an excuse for postponing self evaluations. Self evaluation work plans will need to be especially concerned with methodology. They should place extra attention on the completion of the Evaluation Matrix emphasising a detailed review of rationale, efficiency and effectiveness factors. Similarly, in spite of the fact that partners have not been involved in the original planning process, they may, and should, be invited to participate in the evaluation exercise.

3.3 Monitoring in UNHCR

The quality of self evaluation depends very much on the existence of a vibrant and well functioning monitoring system. This is so partly because monitoring itself contains strong evaluative elements, and partly because it serves as a basis for subsequent more in-depth evaluative exercises.

Within UNHCR we may distinguish various types of evaluative functions carried out by the Bureaux, most of which fall in the category of "monitoring" but are nevertheless intended to provide an evaluative type of feedback. Of importance in this respect are the following:

- **Periodic local meetings.** These meetings, with NGO partners, government officials, donor participants and other UN agencies as the case may be are intended to co-ordinate ongoing activities. The frequency of such meetings depends on local conditions, including the speed with which political situations could change. The frequency of such meetings also depends on the managerial competence and insights of the local UNHCR Field Representative.
- **Periodic regional meetings.** They also serve to convene the main players of refugee operations, but now on a much wider regional basis. Not all representatives systematically convene such meetings. Problems of logistics, as well as the natural inclinations of field representatives, play a role in utilising this tool.
- **Situation reports ("Sitreps")** provide up-to-date information to headquarters on a regular basis. In certain critical situations, such as the Great Lakes operation, Sitreps could be submitted as frequently as once a week. These reports represent an essential ingredient of management control, and the situational feedback they provide are but one example of the practicality of evaluative material of this nature.
- **Sub-Project Monitoring Reports (SPMRs)** are reports filled out by implementing partners and describe activities that took place during the reporting period. They are used by the Field Representative to complete the Project Monitoring Report.
- **Project Monitoring Reports (PMRs)** are submitted to Headquarters twice a year, once in the middle of the year, and then again at the end of the year. The latter is called the "End of Project PMR" and should be completed not later than three months into the next year. The term "end of project" is somewhat misleading because it actually presents a round-up of the previous year's activities, and has little or nothing to do with the end of a project.¹⁷ But the term is revealing in that its primary function appears to be financial reporting (Part I of the PMR), with the "End of Project PMR" representing a financial accounting of the previous calendar year. The narrative Part II of the PMR presents a description of the activities and is used, by and large, as an explanation of the financial statistics.

Perhaps the key problem with the monitoring system, as it currently exists, is the serious shortage of an evaluative element, principally as it appears in reporting. The SPMRs and the PMRs provide a description of progress, not an analysis of progress. They focus on inputs and activities rather than outputs and results. There is a common feeling at Headquarters that these reports, aside from their financial statistics, do not contain the information required for informed decision making. At the same time, the field does not receive feedback from Headquarters on their reporting. Instead, field offices are often deluged with requests for information that could have been made available had the PMRs been more informative and analytical.

The origin of this problem can be found in the late 1980s when a new Financial Management Information System was introduced by the then High Commissioner, Mr. Jean Pierre Hocke. A tremendous amount of energy was devoted to training field staff in financial reporting under the new system, with positive results. Training on the management side of the FMIS, however, was

interrupted by the contraction of UNHCR activities in 1991. Coaching in the planning function was, therefore, never fully provided at the field level,¹⁸ nor was coaching imparted in evaluation methodology and analysis. The need for training in planning was recognised by the Delphi team, and is very much stressed by the current OMS change management team.

Chapter 4 , Section 6, of the UNHCR Manual provides guidelines for the completion of PMRs and SPMRs. In the final performance report (part 2 of the final PMR) there is a requirement to provide a narrative explanation of achievement against objectives using performance indicators in the project description. These guidelines are not being followed, partly because of the above mentioned lack of previous training, partly because of the fact that feedback from Headquarters on PMRs rarely takes place. Comments by the OMS change management team are interesting in this respect. *"Project documentation in general has been seen as a means of obtaining funding, rather than as a management tool supporting co-ordination, monitoring and control during implementation. The documentation is often not distributed to non-programme staff who may be engaged in monitoring and who could contribute to reporting and improvements in design, and is often disregarded by partners once the agreement has been signed, particularly where the focus of discussion with UNHCR from then on is predominantly a discussion on budget and expenditure, which is in turn reflected in the input and activity-level bias of reporting."*¹⁹ Improvements to the monitoring system, as recommended by the OMS change management team are summarised in Box 2 below.

Box 2

Monitoring in UNHCR Areas for Improvement

- Focus operational teams on the continuous evolution of critical success indicators.
- Systematise the recording of assessment and monitoring data
- Reporting to EXCOM and donors at the situational level
- Better guidance on what to monitor
- Better integration of sector-specific and statistical reporting
- Greater beneficiary and partner involvement

Source: OMS Change Management Team

3.4 An Integrated Approach to Self Evaluation

It would not be an exaggeration to say that a self evaluation culture is, by and large, difficult to detect within UNHCR. Self evaluations in the form of special studies, field level reviews, provision of additional information to Headquarters, etc. do take place.²⁰ But they are ad hoc in nature and do not follow a systematic and structured approach. Nor are they explicitly designed to foster learning by those not directly involved in the operation in question. Important learning takes place through exposure to field realities, i.e. through day to day experience. This should not be underestimated when staff is transferred frequently and is exposed to many different local and Headquarters situations. Nevertheless, learning from

experience, and learning from ad hoc types of studies and special reviews, cannot substitute for a more structured learning process that a properly designed self evaluation system could offer.

The fostering of a self evaluation culture requires an integrated move forward on all fronts. It will not come overnight, but gradually, after the introduction of appropriate systems and procedures relating to planning and monitoring, the establishment of appropriate guidelines, and the provision of well focused training. Progress should be made in all these areas as soon as possible.

A focus on these supportive areas, however, is not sufficient by itself. There needs to be created a genuine interest in self evaluation at the top level, an interest that can filter down to management at the operational level, i.e. at the Director's level for each Bureau, and from there on down. Co-ordination of the self evaluation process needs to be firmly established within each Bureau Director's office. At the moment, Bureaux at Headquarters do not have advisory staff with evaluation expertise that could be applied to planning, designing and managing evaluative studies within the respective areas of geographic responsibility. Similarly, no evaluation expertise exists at the Director's level that is devoted to ensuring a more analytical and evaluative approach to monitoring.

The enhancement of self evaluation in UNHCR requires an integrated approach whereby evaluative practices are introduced at the field level through changes in systems and procedures. These must be accompanied by training, as well as co-ordination provided through functional staff attached to the Director's office. The conditions required to carry out useful self evaluations, and establish a feedback process that fosters learning, could be summarised as follows.

- Introduction of a viable project and programme planning system with an emphasis on the components mentioned earlier (a solutions strategy to planning, the use of the Logical Framework Analysis, emphasis on results rather than outputs, and introduction of participatory planning).
- Establishment of a more results oriented monitoring system that allows measurement of progress against objectives. while revisiting critical assumptions that affect risk management. Key improvements would include a more evaluative and analytical PMR and SPMR (including more intimate partner involvement), and more systematic local and regional meetings.
- The establishment of a self evaluation co-ordinating function, situated at the Bureau Director's level, working in close collaboration with the field representatives, dealing with the entire self evaluation cycle, from self evaluation planning to the feedback of findings.
- Establishment of a dissemination process that will include elements more fully discussed in Part II of this report.
- Establishment of key internal linkages between self evaluation and :
 - project/programme planning. This linkage would emphasise the need to include in the planning document a self evaluation budget, a self evaluation scope, design and methodology, and relevant lessons learned from previous experience
 - new policies and programmes. This linkage would ensure that findings of a policy nature are brought to the attention of senior management through an effective feedback system.
 - programme management. This linkage would ensure a system whereby lessons learned of an operational and

strategic nature are brought to the attention of programme management for decision.

- manuals/guidelines. This linkage will result in possible adjustments to policy, strategy and operation guidelines as a result of self evaluation findings.
- training. This linkage would allow incorporation of lessons learned in the training activities of the Agency.
- central evaluation function. This important linkage consists of (1) co- ordination of self evaluation and central evaluation annual and long term plans for submission to senior management; (2) integration of self evaluation and central evaluation findings into a coherent Agency dissemination and feedback system; (3) methodological guidance from central evaluation to the self evaluation function; and (4) possible joint evaluations in areas of common interest, especially end of project/phase evaluations.

These and other issues will be discussed in more detail in Part II of this report.

Part Two: Key Steps in Enhancing Evaluation

Introduction

The need to improve the evaluation function in UNHCR has been expressed on many occasions in the past. If we go back to the beginning of this decade, we see that the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, during its extraordinary session in May 1990, recommended "*that the UNHCR evaluation function be strengthened and its independence assured within UNHCR's organisational structure so that this function can serve more effectively as a catalyst for operational/organisational change and rationalisation*".¹ The Central Evaluation Section, in 1992, prepared an internal document identifying the areas for improvements emphasising, *inter alia*, that the Unit does not have the capacity to respond to evaluation needs.² A CIDA evaluation of UNHCR in 1992, within the context of an overall review of organisational strategy and performance, recommended that "*UNHCR should strengthen the evaluation function and determine how it might link to the suggested policy analysis function*".³ Of more recent date is the review of the evaluation capacities of multilateral organisations, undertaken by the Australian Government in 1997/98. This review contained a recommendation, addressed to the Australian representatives on the governing bodies of the organisations concerned, to "*monitor the allocation of increased resources to upgrade monitoring and evaluation capacities in the UN agencies, in UNHCR in particular*".⁴ In addition, there are a number of recent papers produced internally by UNHCR staff dealing with the evaluation function, containing certain clear recommendations towards enhancement.⁵

In recent years, one has witnessed mounting pressure from various members of the Executive Committee to come up with a series of concrete proposals towards strengthening the evaluation function. More in particular, the need for complete transparency was stressed as a fundamental aspect of public accountability, objectivity of the function was considered essential, and sufficient resources should be applied to allow meaningful learning to take place.

This second part of the study is intended to look at ways in which the evaluation function could be enhanced to address these concerns.

Chapter I: Establishing the Enabling Structure

In order to simplify the discussion, it may be useful to first speak about the need for certain fundamental structural changes and pre-conditions, and then to discuss the need for a series of refinements to various aspects of the evaluation cycle. In this chapter we will discuss issues related to the basic structure.

1.1 Ensuring Management Commitment

Without top management commitment, enhancement of the evaluation function will remain difficult to achieve. A number of major decisions will have to be taken with respect to strategy, resource allocation, training and re-organisation. In addition, the process of introducing the various steps towards improvement will benefit from close monitoring and direction, at least for the first one or two years when systems are set up. The best way to ensure strong management commitment is by having key decision makers intimately involved in the process. A judicious use should be made of the existing high level Committee structure in UNHCR to guide and approve key decisions related to the enhancement of the evaluation function in UNHCR, thus ensuring top management ownership of the enhancement process.

The three main bodies envisaged for decision making are the Senior Management Committee (SMC), the Operations Review Board (ORB), and the Project Board for the Operations Management System (OMS). The latter will review and decide on issues dealing with the adoption of required systems and procedures; the ORB will deal with decisions related to resource allocation, and the SMC will deal with the fundamental decisions concerning evaluation objectives, planning and organisation.

Within their respective spheres of responsibility, these Committees will need to be concerned with the following basic decisions that deal with structural change and the establishment of necessary pre-conditions:

- Review recommendations appearing in this report. This would clearly be a responsibility of the Senior Management Committee in the first instance.
- Review options for re-organisation of the central evaluation function and approve such re-organisation if found desirable.
- Review current staff resources, and approve posts for permanent staff fully dedicated to central evaluation and self evaluation.
- Examine financial requirements, and approve financial resources to be made available for central level evaluation and self evaluation.
- Oversee the drafting of relevant changes to guidelines for planning, monitoring and evaluation in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual with a view to introducing new practices, systems and procedures (currently being defined by the OMS change management team).
- Examine training requirements both at Headquarters and in the field and ensure close integration of the evaluation function into the formulation of a training module (currently being defined by the OMS change management team).

The above major steps will be discussed below.

1.2 Organisational Placement of Central Evaluation

The effectiveness of the evaluation function is very much dependent on how it is situated within the overall organisational configuration of the Agency. Its relationship to management, and its lines of responsibility towards other functional as well as operational units, determine its relevance and usefulness. It

is, therefore, necessary to look critically at the current organisational placement of the Central Evaluation Unit.

It is important to preserve the independence of the central evaluation function and to shield it from line management influence. At the moment, the Unit is part of the Inspection and Evaluation Service. The latter acts in an advisory capacity to the High Commissioner and, as such, the Unit is well placed in the overall organisational hierarchy. It is evaluation orthodoxy, and something accepted internationally, that the head of a central evaluation service should report directly to the highest level in the organisation. This wise tradition would rule out a substantially different hierarchical placement for the Unit: a direct tie to the highest level should be maintained.

The question whether or not the Central Evaluation Unit should be maintained as part of the IES requires a little more thought. Although there are similarities between the functions within IES (enhanced Inspection could move from a largely management audit function to a more evaluative function, discussed in Part I of this report), it is also true that Evaluation has a fundamentally different mandate from both Inspection and Investigation. It is concerned with fostering learning within the Agency; and it is concerned with policy formulation for the Agency. Neither of these two key objectives are very well served within the current organisational configuration. There is a need for a close and direct link between the Unit and a functional section in UNHCR concerned with policy research and dissemination of information. Such a functional section exists in the form of the Centre for Documentation and Research (CDR).

Amalgamation of the Central Evaluation Unit with CDR makes sense from a number of points of view. CDR has been engaged in policy research for some time now through its Policy Research Unit. The latter could provide a complementary service to central evaluation by contributing further research leading to clear policy formulation. Also, CDR reports to the Policy Committee which the Evaluation Unit does not, but should do in order to validate its function. In addition, CDR has experience with dissemination of information through its RefWorld and CD ROM technology, a function that should be enhanced to accommodate the dissemination and feedback objectives of the central evaluation function. Lastly, CDR currently reports, in an advisory function, to the Assistant High Commissioner who also chairs the Policy Committee. The fit seems quite reasonable.

Consideration should, therefore, be given to the amalgamation of the Central Evaluation Unit with the Centre for Documentation and Research in order to enhance learning and policy formulation within the Agency.

It is of interest to note that this idea is not new. As was remarked in the introduction of this Part II of the report, the CIDA evaluation of UNHCR in 1992 similarly recommended that a link be established between the evaluation function and the (suggested) policy analysis function.⁶ In case the above recommendation is accepted, it is important to understand that such amalgamation should, in no way, diminish the role nor the stature of the evaluation function within the Agency. On the contrary, the role and stature of central evaluation could be enhanced through such a move by strongly emphasising the evaluation and feedback roles of the new service. This would amount to the establishment of a new and independent organisational entity, principally concerned with the complementary activities of evaluation and policy research and feedback services. Official recognition of its unique position could come through the creation of a new name for this entity, such as the "Evaluation and Research Centre".

At the same time, an amalgamation would also strengthen CDR's role. The Policy Research Unit of CDR could continue its function in policy planning, but now with clear ties to the practical realities of the field through evaluation. It would continue to define policy guidelines for approval of the Policy Committee, but now in collaboration with the evaluation specialists. It would establish an effective dissemination and feedback system for the Agency covering both central and self evaluation findings. It would help to ensure that recommendations and policy guidelines are being implemented (follow-up). At the same time, it would build up a body of information designed to enhance corporate memory. In short, the amalgamation of CDR with Central Evaluation could result in a powerful and well located centre for corporate learning.

Should the amalgamation be accepted, the new "Evaluation and Research Centre" would immediately be called upon to act as the secretariat for the preparation of various decision documents for deliberation by senior management, especially those concerned with resource allocation to the evaluation function, and (see later) those dealing with the evaluation planning process, evaluation methodology, and a dissemination and feedback strategy. This responsibility as a secretariat would seem reasonable. Not only would it be important for the evaluation function to become intimately involved in mapping its own future, but the organisational ties of CDR to the Assistant High Commissioner would also come into the logic of this suggestion.

1.3 Provision of Adequate Staff Resources

As was discussed in Part I of this report, current permanent staff resources put at the disposal of evaluation in UNHCR are vastly insufficient. At the moment, there exists one evaluation position in IES to co-ordinate central level evaluations. There are no evaluation positions in the Bureaux to co-ordinate self evaluations at the field level.

1.3.1 Central evaluation

Looking first at the central evaluation function, two points need to be made. In the first place, UNHCR has, for a long time, had the smallest central evaluation function in the UN family. The one evaluation position in IES that exists now, should be compared to six in WFP, six in UNICEF, five in UNDP and four in UNFPA. In the second place, the frequent use of UNHCR staff awaiting placement in no way compensates for this shortage. These staff members have been used on a temporary basis for specific evaluation jobs only, had no prior access to training in evaluation and could not be considered evaluation specialists. In order to ensure an appropriate scope and adequate management of evaluation, a quantum leap in current thinking needs to take place.

As a minimum, four additional evaluation positions need to be created in the Central Evaluation Unit, three at the P4 level and one at the P3 level (making it five in total), accompanied by the creation of at least two support positions, one secretarial, the other clerical.

The suggestion to add four posts to the Central Evaluation Unit rests on the scope of work that could be envisaged for a comprehensive evaluation service. The duties of these additional staff will be consistent with the proposed work breakdown structure appearing in Annex 2 and will basically include actual field assessments, methodological support and control, management of consultants, dissemination and feedback of findings, participation in policy formulation, and follow-up. At this point it would be pre-mature to determine the precise tasks of each staff member, but it could be foreseen that a significant amount of time will need to be devoted to the dissemination / feedback and follow-up functions (e.g.

one and a half person years), as well as the methodological support function (e.g. half a person year). The remaining person years (i.e. three) will be devoted to the preparation, management and carrying out of field work.

A cross section of expertise should be selected for these four additional posts. Important qualifications include specialised knowledge in institutional strengthening, economics, statistics, and community development. Since the Agency will be very much dependent on central evaluation for learning and policy advice, it is essential that the candidates be selected from the best and the brightest the Agency can offer. Incumbents will have to have excellent analytical talents, and good writing skills. They should be given training in the latest evaluation methodology. Their standard assignment lengths should be for a minimum of four years, with a one year trial period. It is not envisaged that these new positions would be so-called specialists posts (i.e. not subject to rotation), which means that training in evaluation methodology should be provided as a normal part of appointment. The unit as a whole should continue to stay abreast of new evaluation approaches.

In a time of contraction, the idea of creating four additional posts for central evaluation may have its detractors. The case to be made rests solidly on the tremendous scope of work that exists, the fact that some of these four additional posts may be found by shifts in responsibilities within the Agency, and the strong emphasis that member countries currently place on the enhancement of the evaluation function. If UNHCR wants to move from the rear into the vanguard of evaluation, it should envisage an expanded scope with large scale studies dealing with issues such as re-integration, impact on the environment, relationship with partners, capacity building, etc.

Willingness by donors to make available evaluation expertise to UNHCR under secondment should be investigated. It helps to know that other UN agencies also employ five to six officers in their central evaluation service. But this is no justification by itself. Both the preparation and implementation of evaluations, as well as the establishment and maintenance of a viable feedback and follow-up system are extremely time consuming. It is the tremendous volume of work entailed in central evaluation that fully justifies the additional staff recommended.

1.3.2. Self evaluation by Bureaux

As was mentioned earlier in this report, an enhanced planning and monitoring system should serve as the foundation for a self evaluation function in the Bureaux. While self evaluation would greatly benefit from the anticipated introduction of such systems, it would not be wise to postpone important decisions in this area. For self evaluations to become incorporated into the culture of Bureaux, it is necessary that the effort be co-ordinated, guided and encouraged from the top. This does not imply that Field Representatives are absolved from evaluation responsibilities. On the contrary, co-ordination from the top would facilitate the effort at field level by offering guidance in establishing an annual programme, assistance in evaluation design and methodology, identification of technical expertise required, and dissemination of results towards action and for learning.

In order for it to become truly self evaluative in nature, it is essential that this co-ordinating function be established firmly in the office of the Director of the Bureau. The alternative of placing it in DOS would, to a large extent, defeat an important purpose of self evaluation, i.e. to learn from your own experience. There is nothing that fosters learning more than looking critically at your own work. If a co-ordinating function for evaluation were established in DOS, an important factor of self criticism would be lost to the Bureaux. Nor would the

appointment of evaluation co-ordinators at the Bureau Director's level be inconsistent with the facilitation process that the OMS change management team envisages for the introduction of new planning procedures.

Similarly, the option that operational reviews or mid-term evaluations should be conducted for the Bureaux by the central evaluation service would defeat the purpose of self evaluation. While there would be some justification for involving a member of the central evaluation team in a joint self evaluation (especially when it concerns an end of project/phase evaluation), the final responsibility for self evaluation should rest with the Bureaux. If one takes this responsibility away, it will be very difficult indeed to introduce a critical and evaluative culture in the Bureaux.

Sceptics may object that self evaluations would not be objective enough. We feel that self evaluations constitute an intimate part of the management of field operations and could, in many ways, be compared with supervisory missions carried out by international financial institutions. To increase the level of objectivity, it would be normal to consider participation by non-Bureau staff in the reviews, e.g. technical experts, partners, private sector specialists, etc.

It could be argued that an evaluation co-ordinating function should be located at the field level. While it is true that evaluation liaison functions will need to be performed at the field level (e.g. drafting individual workplans for operational reviews, recruitment of local consultants, ensuring participation by partners, managing the study process, co-ordinating report preparation, etc.), it is also true that central level support from the Bureau's Headquarters may substantially facilitate the task of the field office. This is especially important in view of the fact that fundamental changes in the planning and monitoring process will need to be introduced, changes that will absorb a great deal of time and energy on the part of field staff. Essentially, we fear that if co-ordination of the self evaluation function is left to the field, without guidance from the top, not much will happen. The need to choose among competing priorities for evaluation should also not be underestimated. Not every project and sub-project can be the subject of an evaluative review every year. Selections will need to be made, and they need to be made by a centrally located individual with direct access to the Director him (her)self.

The whole concept of Bureaux self evaluation is new to UNHCR. It would, perhaps, be wise to introduce an evaluation co-ordinating function on a pilot basis in the largest Bureaux, and review the experience after a suitable period of time.

It is, therefore, suggested that *an Evaluation Co-ordination Officer should be appointed on a pilot basis, in a staff capacity, to the Director's Office in each of the following Bureaux: (1) Central East and West Africa; (2) Europe (including Yugoslavia); and (3) Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.*

The basic functions of the Evaluation Co-ordinator for each one of the three Bureaux would include:

- In conjunction with the Field Representatives, and in collaboration with the Central Evaluation Unit, establish an annual self evaluation work plan for the Bureau, distinguishing between operational reviews, mid-term evaluations, and end-of-project/phase evaluations.
- Assist the Field Representatives in formulating the design and scope of each evaluation to be performed, as well as in establishing a cost breakdown.

- In collaboration with the Central Evaluation Unit, advise on the methodology to be used for each evaluation, with specific emphasis on type of expertise required, selection of participating partners, nature and conduct of the evaluation process, report preparation, and dissemination / feedback of findings.
- In collaboration with DOS, assist, where necessary, in identifying specialists to participate in the evaluation.
- Participate in, and/or monitor self evaluations conducted at field level where considered appropriate and following an annual self evaluation plan.
- Work in close collaboration with the Central Evaluation Unit in designing and implementing a feedback mechanism, and advise the Director on lessons learned and their implications for planning, operations and training.
- Monitor follow-up.

The selection of the three above mentioned Bureaux for this pilot effort would be contingent upon the outcome of the Review of UNHCR Head Quarters Structure that is currently taking place. A possible reduction in the number of Bureaux may affect the above choice and could even justify expanding this choice.

1.4 Provision of Adequate Financial Resources

The available budget for central evaluations is substantially less than is required. There is no budget for self evaluations, and current project and programme planning does not consider the inclusion of an evaluation budget.

1.4.1 Central evaluation

As was mentioned in Part I of this report, a total of US \$184,000 was used for outside consultants in 1997. This is a very small amount considering the scope of evaluations that could be envisaged. The reason why this amount was so small – as has been explained – was that substantial use was made of UNHCR staff awaiting appointments. While there may be financial advantages to this practice, it has not always been possible to match professional capabilities with evaluation requirements. Nor does this practice take advantage of possible new insights that might be purchased in the private sector. At the same time, a limited budget necessarily limits the type and scope of evaluations that could be envisaged. With a strengthened Central Evaluation Unit, management of evaluations is facilitated and bolder evaluations could be envisaged.

It is, therefore, suggested that *an annual Central Evaluation budget, to be used exclusively for outsourcing, should be established at the US \$0.5 million level.*

In considering this amount (a twofold increase from the current annual budget of US \$240,000), it is important to realise that a mere two full-sized evaluations, covering important themes such as environmental impact and performance of partners, might pretty much exhaust the total amount in one year. The amount of US \$ 0.5 million should be considered a reasonable minimum and will likely be sufficient given the fact that newly appointed evaluation staff, as well as a strategic use of joint evaluations, may take the pressure off outsourcing.

1.4.2 Self evaluations by Bureaux

It was suggested in Part I of this report that plans in the new Operations Management System should include an allocation for evaluation at the project/programme planning stage. Until this new system is established, it will be

necessary to ensure available financing for the self evaluation function in the three Bureaux selected for this pilot endeavour.

It is, therefore, suggested that *an annual allocation for outsourcing and administration of US \$200,000 should be made available to each one of the three Bureaux selected for the pilot phase of the self evaluation function, until such time when this allocation could be built into the annual project/programme planning process.*

1.4.3 Total cost implications

As should be clear, the above mentioned suggestions for launching a viable evaluation service in UNHCR have cost implications. Estimated total costs that would be involved are presented below.

Table 1
Estimated Cost Implications for an Enhanced Evaluation Service
(total, per year)

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Central Evaluation | |
| 1 Head of Evaluation (P5) | US \$ 125,000 |
| 3 Evaluation Officer Positions (P4) | US \$ 350,000 |
| 1 Evaluation Officer Positions (P3) | US \$ 93,000 |
| 2 Support Positions | US \$ 140,000 |
| Estimated Other Admin Budget | US \$ 250,000 |
| Outsourcing Budget | US \$ 500,000 |
| Sub-Total | US \$1,458,000 |
| Self Evaluation (pilot phase) | |
| 3 Evaluation Co-ordinators (P4) | US \$ 350,000 |
| Outsourcing and Admin Budgets | US \$ 600,000 |
| Sub Total | US \$ 950,000 |
| Grand Total Per Year | US \$2,408,000 |

Given the estimated 1997 Central Evaluation budget of US \$ 600,000 (see Table 4, Part I of this report), the total estimated additional allocation for central evaluation alone is a little more than US \$ 850,000. If we add the estimated costs for the first year of the pilot phase of self evaluation, total additional costs are estimated to be US \$ 1,800,000 per year. It is estimated that this is a minimum requirement. The US \$250,000 administrative budget for central evaluation pays for HCR staff engaged as temporary evaluators, it pays for support staff as well as travel for the whole evaluation service. The US \$500,000 budget for outsourcing is very modest considering the scope of evaluations to be anticipated. The administration and outsourcing budget for self evaluation by the three Bureaux is similarly considered modest at US \$200,000 each. It should be remembered that self evaluation would be conducted not only by individual staff members of the Bureaux concerned, but also by specialists from the private sector where necessary. As was mentioned earlier, introduction of other sources of expertise in the self evaluation function would tend to increase the degree of objectivity, a concern that should always be kept in mind.

While we feel that the above costs of an enhanced evaluation function are realistic, there may very well be scope for reducing the additional budgetary impact. Specifically, internal shifts in staff responsibilities may do away with some of the additional financial outlays identified. The danger here is that an emphasis may be placed on shifting responsibilities from, or adding responsibilities to, certain individuals, rather than on ensuring that the best expertise available is selected for the task.

If it is agreed that the resource requirements as discussed above are necessary and realistic, the first step would be to identify the required expertise, and determine how this expertise can be made available full time to the evaluation function. Both the selected Bureaux as well as the CDR (including now the Evaluation Unit) should be requested to do that. The next step would be to identify the additional financial resources required to carry out an annual central-level and Bureaux-level evaluation programme.⁷

Sceptics may object that, in times of contraction, resources of this magnitude devoted to evaluation are simply unrealistic. Yet, it is unlikely that member countries would be satisfied with half-baked measures in the enhancement of the evaluation function. It should be noted also that the total estimated financial requirements for an enhanced programme of central evaluation (US \$1.5 million) compare well with those of the UNDP (which also amounted to US \$1.5 million in 1997) and is lower than the WFP (with a 1997 budget of US \$2.4 million). The willingness of donors to provide additional contributions, in terms of additional financing and/or secondment of evaluation specialists, for this purpose should be tested.

It is, therefore, suggested that *the results, conclusions and recommendations of this present study should be submitted to member countries in their entirety with a view to obtaining their concurrence with the suggested approach, and ascertaining availability of additional resources if required.*

1.5 Required Supporting Services

In order to establish a strong and well functioning evaluation capacity in UNHCR, two important supporting steps are required, steps that are currently being acted upon by the OMS change management team. They relate to the need to enhance the planning function in the Agency, and the need for training in the closely interrelated functions of planning, monitoring, and evaluation. These topics have been briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, and will be mentioned here again to emphasise the organic link that exists between planning and evaluation.

1.5.1 Enhancement of planning in UNHCR

As was suggested in Part I of this report, a properly functioning planning function is important for both central evaluation and self evaluation by the Bureaux. A summary of improvements in planning suggested by the OMS change management team appear on page 23 of Part I of this report. Those of particular importance for the evaluation function are the introduction of the LFA approach to planning, the solutions strategy approach to planning,⁸ the emphasis on results rather than outputs, and the introduction of a participatory approach to planning with partners.

In order for self evaluation to take hold in the Bureaux, the need for evaluation should be incorporated into the planning system at the very beginning of plan formulation. This means that: (a) a budget for self evaluation should be set aside at the planning stage ; (b) the evaluation methodology, scope and design should be established at the planning stage; and (c) lessons learned from previous

experience should be indicated in the planning document (see page 25 of Part I of this report). In view of the importance of planning in establishing a viable evaluation function in UNHCR, both at the central level and by Bureaux themselves, it is important to indicate our support of the vision of the OMS change management team in this respect, notably the need for *Intensive efforts to apply a new and improved methodology to the planning function in UNHCR with the aim of, inter alia, providing better support to the central and self evaluation efforts in the Agency.*

1.5.2. Training in planning, monitoring and evaluation

In establishing a more vibrant evaluation and learning culture in UNHCR, it would be wise to decide what we mean by evaluation and what its basic objectives are. Of particular importance is the difference in objectives between central level evaluation and self evaluation. This difference determines the scope and design of evaluation, the way in which evaluations are carried out, and the way in which findings and lessons learned are used and disseminated.

Central level evaluations are those concerned with situations, themes and sectors cutting across operations, designed to define lessons and recommendations that could be applied to policy formulation, strategy definition and programme/project implementation. They should be fully objective studies, formative or summative in nature, conducted on the basis of a carefully predetermined methodology, focusing on efficiency, effectiveness and final results. Findings of these evaluations are, without exception, fully transparent, i.e. accessible to anyone inside and outside the Agency.

Self evaluations concentrate on a review of specific ongoing operations (performance reviews or – more elaborately – mid-term evaluations) and impact and end-of-project/phase evaluations (with a more comprehensive approach in scope and design). The difference between central level evaluation and self evaluations lies not only in their respective focus, but also in the way in which findings are used. Self evaluations are primarily intended to help management in deciding on the need for adjustments in operations. As an operational management tool, results of these evaluations are directly of concern to Bureau management.

A grey area between central level evaluations and self evaluations resides in project/phase impact evaluations (e.g. the Mozambique repatriation study conducted in 1996). Because of the institutional learning that may result from such studies, responsibility for them could be shared between line management and a central evaluation service. In either case, full transparency would need to be ensured.

In order to guide the planning, methodology, implementation and dissemination of the evaluation function within UNHCR, it is suggested an *explicit and detailed statement of the nature and objectives of evaluation be drafted for inclusion in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual.*

The drafting of new guidelines, while important, will not be sufficient. What is needed is a massive and long term training effort, together with a well prepared sequence of steps designed to introduce these new practices, including close monitoring of compliance. The OMS change management team is fully aware of this training need.

The training function in UNHCR appears to be dispersed among various different organisational entities and it is difficult to detect one central co-ordinating mechanism that succeeds in standardising training approaches and modules. An

evaluation is currently on the way to analyse the situation and to offer suggestions towards improvement. DOS has taken on the responsibility for training in planning and monitoring, fully integrating evaluation. Under the current decentralisation of training, DOS is clearly the body most capable of co-ordinating the envisaged training programme. Currently a training package is being designed. We wish to emphasise its importance to evaluation and indicate our full support for *a comprehensive training module and strategy with the purpose of introducing a new and integrated approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation in the Agency*. It is recognised that training by itself may not be sufficient, and may need to be supplemented by hands-on support until systems are solidly embedded into the Agency culture.

Chapter 2: Improvements to the Evaluation Cycle

In order to examine required improvements systematically, we will look at each one of the three major components of the evaluation cycle. These components are: (1) formulation of the evaluation programme; (2) conduct of evaluations using the right methodology; and (3) implementing the right dissemination, feedback and follow-up process.

2.1 Strategic Planning for Evaluation

In speaking of evaluation planning, two issues are important. In the first place, annual evaluation plans need to reflect a long term evaluation strategy. In the second place, annual evaluation plans need to be established on the basis of collaboration between a central evaluation service and self evaluation units. As was intimated in Part I of this report, both ideas will need to be newly introduced. We will first discuss the need for a long term evaluation strategy.

2.1.1 The need for a long term vision

Perhaps one of the most important steps in the overall evaluation cycle is to decide what it is we wish to measure, and why we wish to measure it. Experience of donor organisations suggests that, if one wants to obtain value for money from evaluations, it is necessary to identify first what purpose an evaluation is to serve. One has to guard against undertaking evaluations for statutory reasons only. The decision to undertake an evaluation needs to be based on keen management interest, and a clear vision of the strategic and operational use of findings. At the same time, a powerful monitoring system would, in certain cases, make an evaluation redundant. Other alternatives to a full fledged evaluation can be contemplated, e.g. end of project reports, local and regional conferences, workshops, etc. In other words, the expense of an evaluation needs to be justified.

As a general principle, it can be said that the purpose of evaluation is to increase the knowledge of UNHCR of its refugee operations, their rationale, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, in order to provide feedback and guidance for policy development and strategic planning, and to improve the management of operations. In order to use evaluation as a strategic instrument, a number of criteria have to be considered before the decision is made to conduct one. For the central evaluation function, these criteria establish the link between the activity to be evaluated and the Agency objectives that cut across situations, or deal with themes, sectors and phases. For self evaluations, the selection criteria provide the link between the purpose of evaluation and the solution strategy that is being pursued by the Bureaux, with an emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness issues.

As was mentioned earlier in Part I of this report, the formulation of an annual

evaluation plan cannot occur in isolation from a long term vision of feedback requirements. While the consultative process that is currently being used in establishing an annual plan is appropriate, it omits a solid grounding in a long term vision of evaluation objectives. The latter should be a response to the strategic thrusts of the Agency, whether they be of an operational nature dealing with issues of efficiency, or thematic in nature dealing with key cross-cutting policies such as the environment, women, etc., or other policy concerns. In the absence of such a solid grounding, annual plans may fail to support an ongoing learning process where findings on issues accumulate through a multi-year effort and contribute to increasing refinements in policy formulation. Without reference to a long term evaluation vision, annual plans may fall victim to impulsive reactions arising from temporary frustrations of consulted staff, rather than reflect carefully considered issues of more strategic and long term dimensions.

It goes beyond the scope of this paper to draft such a long term evaluation strategy, or to propose a conclusive list of criteria that annual evaluation plans should attempt to satisfy. The following are some of the criteria that come to mind:

- Direct relevance to the long term strategy of UNHCR as expressed in long term planning documents such as UNHCR 2000, and its policy revisions, (including the accepted themes of women, children, and the environment).
- Specific organisation priorities as expressed by such activities as emergencies, care/maintenance, durable solutions, capacity building, etc.
- Collaboration with partners, including participatory approaches in planning implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Special requirements by management
- Complementarity with policy research activities
- Evaluation priorities expressed by member countries.

Anything but exhaustive, this indicative list is merely intended to identify the type of criteria that should influence long term evaluation planning. Only when annual evaluation plans contain a clear reflection of such a long term plan will they begin to contribute meaningfully to an ever increasing body of findings that, in a cumulative sense, will serve as a basis for policy formulation.

In this respect it is important to realise that, with the existence of a long term plan as a guide, the independence of the evaluation function will be enhanced. Annual planning will become more pro-active, without necessarily giving up the consultative nature of the current process. It would, therefore, be important that, *a long term evaluation strategy be drafted that will form the basis for the annual programmes of central evaluation as well as self evaluation.*

2.1.2 Co-ordination of evaluation planning

Common sense would dictate that annual plans by a central evaluation service and those by a self evaluation service be closely co-ordinated. There are a number of reasons for this. It is important to avoid possible duplication, particularly where it concerns end of project/phase evaluations in which both parties may have an interest.

It is also necessary to adopt a common approach in the pursuit of learning. Central evaluations and self evaluations could complement each other. Learning and feedback efforts could be mutually reinforcing. As much as possible the choice of evaluations to be conducted, and the selection of issues to be reviewed

should be designed to benefit learning in UNHCR as a whole (without, of course, in any way inhibiting the specific purposes for which self evaluations are designed).

Furthermore, one can anticipate a number of ways in which the central evaluation service could support the self evaluation effort, including methodological guidance, identification of expertise, and actual participation in the field work. Provision of support will have to be based on a co-ordinated planning process.

One of the most important reasons, however, is that top management requires a clear impression of evaluative activity that takes place each year. Top management would need to leave its imprint on the overall evaluation plan and be in a position to incorporate its priorities for the year.

Co-ordination in evaluation planning will need to lead to the preparation of the "corporate plan" for evaluation. To put it differently, the preparation of an annual evaluation plan, being the responsibility of the central evaluation service, should incorporate the individual plans of the Bureaux concerned. This corporate plan would then be reviewed, if necessary revised, and approved by the Policy Committee. It is, therefore, suggested *that the Central Evaluation Service be responsible for the formulation of an annual evaluation plan that, after a co-ordinated formulation process, incorporates both central level evaluations and self evaluation plans of the Bureaux, and submit it to the Policy Committee for approval.*

2.2 An Enhanced Methodological Approach

Methodological improvements that we will briefly discuss here involve the questions as to who conducts evaluations, and how evaluations are conducted.

2.2.1 Human resources

As was intimated in Part I of this study, the past has seen great reliance on evaluators with intimate ties to UNHCR. In certain cases there are clear advantages to using individuals who are aware of the Agency's systems and procedures, who understand "how things work", what the formal and informal relationships are. A former or current UNHCR staff member who has been asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the training function in the Agency, would benefit greatly from an intimate knowledge of "who-does-what" in this complicated area. Similarly, an evaluation of specific systems and procedures performed by a knowledgeable UNHCR staff member could avoid some of the errors in understanding and insight that outsiders might bring to the job.

On the other hand, there are numerous evaluation topics for which prior knowledge of UNHCR is not a direct advantage, and could even be a hindrance in that it could obscure a fresh vision. Many of the field operational issues fall in that category. Many of the thematic issues fall in that category.

One should also not underestimate the speed with which professional evaluators are capable of learning and understanding complicated issues and situations.

It seems important to take a new look at who performs evaluations. Strong reliance in the past on staff members currently between assignments had, at times, somewhat mixed results. Problems were experienced in analytical capabilities, writing skills and evaluation methods used.

While private sector consultants with former UNHCR connections appeared to have worked out well, other consultants without such ties have not been

adequately tested. There exists no carefully selected roster of consultants screened for their evaluation expertise. Yet, there is much capability out there, and the existence of a roster of highly capable consultants could significantly contribute to the quality of evaluations.

Nor was the scope for joint evaluations fully explored, even though two joint evaluations took place in the last two years (with WFP and UNICEF). One could envisage more emphasis being placed on evaluations carried out with interested donors or other agencies. Such an approach would not only introduce scope for new ideas, but it would also reduce the required evaluation budget. Most importantly, it would secure the "buy-in" of participating stakeholders in any remedial action indicated.

The time has also come to launch joint evaluation with partners. Involvement of partners would fall under the rubric of "participatory evaluations", a concept that is very popular and successful in community development, and very applicable to the UNHCR field situations. Participation of partners in the evaluation of their own activities is a type of self evaluation activity that develops a sense of shared ownership, encourages joint learning and fosters co-operative attitudes.

With the limited staffing of the Central Evaluation Unit, development of different sources of expertise, and the pursuit of joint and participatory approaches to evaluation was very difficult and time consuming. With the introduction of new staff resources, however, a totally different approach can be taken. Not only will evaluations be executed more by evaluation staff members themselves, but identification of new sources of evaluation expertise could now be facilitated. A roster could be established, joint evaluations could be organised, and participatory evaluations could be undertaken.

We would, therefore, suggest that *expertise used for conducting evaluations should become more diversified: (1) A carefully screened roster of private sector evaluation consultants should be established as a basis for increased use of private sector expertise; (2) the scope for more joint evaluations should be actively explored; (3) participatory evaluations with partners should be undertaken.*

2.2.2 Preparation and management of evaluations

The results of evaluations, i.e. their findings, recommendations and lessons learned, very much depend on the care with which the evaluations have been designed, the manner in which they are conducted, and the way in which they are presented. With increased staff focused on evaluation, improvements could be made on all three fronts.

The preparation for an evaluation involves the definition of scope and design, and its translation into **terms of reference**. Decisions on scope and design are based on prior analysis of files and documentation, as well as preliminary interviews with, or other feedback from, key informants, i.e. project or programme managers and field representatives.

Terms of reference subsequently form the basis for a **workplan** that will guide the overall evaluation effort, especially focusing on the actual manner in which the evaluation will be conducted, and the way in which findings will be presented, which is concerned with the process of dissemination and feedback. A workplan would, in addition, identify the specific role(s) of evaluator(s), indicate the level of effort by activity, and specify the proposed time schedule.

A workplan normally would start with a background to the project, with reference to objectives and the Logical Framework Analysis (if available), or other sources which state objectives, e.g. Country Operation Plans. This background summarises preliminary research that has been done, and essentially confirms the terms of reference.

An essential part of the workplan is contained in the "evaluation matrix" which conceptualises the terms of reference into an operational framework. An evaluation matrix summarises the scope and design of the evaluation by:

1. identifying the major issues of the evaluation related to rationale, efficiency, effectiveness and results, at the input, output, outcome and impact levels;
2. listing the key questions and sub-questions for each one of these major issues;
3. identifying the objectively verifiable indicators required to measure project/programme parameters, and the qualitative indicators that refine the interpretation of quantitative data;
4. mentioning the sources of data (e.g. documentation, staff, partners, donors, beneficiaries, sites); and
5. anticipating the methods of data collection (e.g. interview protocols and guides, questionnaires, checklists).

An evaluation matrix provides the necessary discipline to the evaluation effort. Although during the course of the evaluation there may be findings that could necessitate a certain deviation from the matrix, the latter should generally be accepted as the overall guide that points the direction. Annex 4 contains a matrix outline.

Aside from the methodology as expressed in the evaluation matrix, a workplan will have to anticipate a process of dissemination of results. This process will involve identification of key stakeholders, and requires decisions on the most effective way to communicate and share findings (e.g. sharing of the evaluation report, organising seminars and workshops, or otherwise, etc.)

Special attention will need to be paid to the **standardisation of reporting**. Standardisation not only encourages the right approach and comprehensive coverage, it also facilitates understanding, and enables an effective way of dissemination and feedback of findings. Aside from the "preliminaries" (cover/title page, table of contents, list of acronyms, list of tables, figures, exhibits), and despite the need for flexibility, reports generally include the following components:

- an Abstract or Executive Summary providing a synopsis of findings
- an Introduction, setting the stage for the report
- an Explanation of Methodology
- the Evaluation Findings following key issues/questions in the matrix
- Conclusions and Recommendations
- Key Lessons Learned, of a developmental and operational nature
- Best Practices
- Overall Rating

In order to develop and standardise a methodological approach to evaluation along the lines very briefly outlined above, we suggest that a *manual be prepared*

that provides standards for project and programme evaluation for approval by senior management. A Manual should also contain a clear indication of the linkages that should be fostered between evaluation and other systems and procedures in the Agency. Such a manual could, in addition, introduce a lexicon of terms for more consistency and clarity in both evaluation reports and subsequent debate.

2.3 Dissemination and Feedback

Both the dissemination of evaluation results (i.e. distribution as such) as well as the feedback process (i.e. the transmission of information with pro-active focus on learning) should have, as their ultimate purpose, the enhancement of policies, strategies and operations of the Agency. Dissemination by itself is of limited use unless it is strategically focused and serves to transform the Agency into a learning entity.

As was intimated in Part I of this report, the actual production of insightful evaluation reports is only a first step. Without an elaborate and effective dissemination and feedback strategy, evaluations will largely constitute an unnecessary expense. It is, therefore, of extreme importance to pay particular attention to dissemination and feedback processes in the Agency, processes which currently exist in only elementary forms due especially to a lack of evaluation staff available to carry out these rather time consuming functions. Once additional staff resources are applied to the evaluation function, one could envisage significant improvements to the current dissemination and feedback system in UNHCR.

As was mentioned in Part I of this report, there appears to be unanimity among UNHCR staff about the need for a more comprehensive and versatile dissemination and feedback system in the Agency. There was also a strong general view that the distribution of evaluation results requires very close targeting in order to avoid information overload. To facilitate understanding of a viable learning system based on evaluations, it may be useful to distinguish between **dissemination mechanisms** which concentrate on the various ways in which evaluation results can be distributed in a relevant and concise manner to client groups, and **feedback mechanisms** which are consciously designed to influence deliberations leading to action.

2.3.1 Dissemination mechanisms

Many creative ways to distribute findings are currently being pursued by multilateral and bilateral agencies.⁹ Of importance among these systems are the following:

- the distribution of the entire evaluation report. Care should be taken to target the stakeholders very carefully. In most bureaucracies officers are overwhelmed by the amount of paper reaching their desks. Unless they have a direct interest in the topic, there is a good chance that the report will be shelved unopened.

the distribution of abstracts or executive summaries. This normally amounts to simply lifting the Executive Summary from the evaluation report and sending it to interested groups inside and outside the organisation. An interested recipient could subsequently request the full report. This dissemination policy has recently been adopted by UNHCR to allow member countries full access to evaluation reports. Standardisation in the preparation of executive summaries, and an emphasis on quality and comprehensiveness,

would clearly be of importance. Distribution of individual executive summaries could be supplemented by an annual compilation of such summaries. Here again, close targeting of the audience would be essential.

- the compilation of annotated bibliographies of evaluation reports. Distribution of even more condensed material would include annotated bibliographies. If such bibliographies present an indication of the most fundamental lessons, they may constitute an attractive and time efficient means for busy officers to stay up to date on evaluation findings, allowing them to request more detailed information if interested.
- the publication of periodicals. National and international organisations have experimented with a number of ways to disseminate information on a regular basis. Of interest here are various types of publications, including news letters highlighting recent evaluation findings and methods, regular special reports focusing on research and policy work, bulletins for senior managers concentrating on corporate policy issues, etc. The types and regularity of such publications are limited only by one's imagination. While there is an undeniable scope for such publications, their effectiveness as learning instruments is not quite clear. In a situation of information overload, a saturation point for such regularity is quickly reached. It is only when the content is fully engrossing, the format attractive and compelling (the "medium becomes the message"), and the message directly relevant, that an experiment could be undertaken in this general area. With this cautionary note, however, a dissemination strategy in UNHCR could well include one or two regular publications of this type.
- the use of seminars and workshops. Seminars and workshops can be a useful dissemination mechanism. They can focus on a specific evaluation, or could be organised independently of an evaluation.

The type focusing on a specific evaluation would normally be organised in the field immediately after the conclusion of the assessment work. The advantage of this approach would be (1) reduced costs (participants and experts are available on the spot); (2) the element of immediacy and relevance (it concerns a topic in which there is good interest); and (3) participation by those immediately affected (which animates learning). Particularly when evaluations become more participatory in nature seminars and workshops could indeed be very effective learning tools, and could also be used to move evaluation recommendations to practical action strategy.

Field seminars and workshops divorced from a specific evaluation focal point can also be useful. However, they should be organised on a very selective basis, and should be justified by the importance and relevance of the topic, the interests of participants, and the costs involved.

Care should be taken in organising any seminars or workshops at Headquarters because of staff time constraints. Some donor countries have been successful, however, in organising such events around a visiting key personality.

- the use of automated systems. Discussions with UNHCR staff revealed an overwhelming preference for an automated dissemination system. It would

avoid unwanted hardcopy information and allow access at the convenience of the client. Staff officers indicated that electronic data should be available through desk top computers, and the system should be user-friendly. Numerous national and international organisations now have automated systems with differing breadth of content. Useful systems contain evaluation reports (central level and operational level), technical analysis reports, synthesis reports, abstracts, and other evaluative material that may be classified by subject matter, sector, theme, etc.

Comprehensive systems may also include project/programme frame data derived from planning documents, as well as operational reviews of a supervisory nature. The data base is searched through a thesaurus of key words, as well as through standard agency codes. Systems should allow searches by subject matter, lessons learned, recommendations, and best practices.

A well designed system could become a powerful dissemination tool for those with access to a desk top computer and intranet. For field operations, a frequently updated CD ROM may be a solution. The introduction of such a system, and its applicability to planning, will require a process of staff sensitisation and training.

At the moment an automated retrieval system that would allow a structured search is not available in UNHCR. Shortly, intranet will introduce full copy viewing of documentation, including past evaluation reports. This is a first, but insufficient, step in the creation of a versatile retrieval system. We suggest that *a study be made to design and cost a structured automated retrieval system for possible installation at the earliest possible time.*

- the establishment of a research and reference service. A research and reference service, to be located in the documentation unit as part of the new Evaluation and Research Centre, may provide an important additional source of information for learning purposes. This service starts where the above mentioned automated system stops. It is designed to respond to special requests for information from planners and management, and is capable of accessing evaluation and academic research material worldwide. This service may identify relevant information for transmittal to requesting staff officers or, upon special request, could provide an analysis of issues related to policy, strategy or operations. The latter analytical research service could easily be overloaded with requests, and would need to be limited to the most strategic issues and satisfy the most strategic requirements.

The above mentioned dissemination methods have their advantages, but also carry their own limitations in terms of relevance, acceptability, effectiveness and costs. In selecting the right mix for UNHCR, one should be guided by a number of fundamental principles. The first principle is that one should respect the information overload from which staff in large bureaucracies such as UNHCR normally suffer. Observance of this principle would tend to focus the use of the printed word on the most essential and the most effective method. Secondly, the power of state of the art technology should be recognised. This principle would favour an emphasis on an automated system, an emphasis that clearly seems to be preferred by UNHCR staff, but also an emphasis that has significant cost implications with the introduction of more powerful software than exists at the moment. Thirdly, learning is best pursued through access to comprehensive information. This principle indicates the need to go beyond evaluation findings of UNHCR and to also learn from the experience of others, including academic

research. A last principle relates to the rather time consuming nature of establishing a viable dissemination system. This principle points to the need to prioritise the various methods described above.

2.3.2 Feedback mechanisms

The term feedback refers to a pro-active system that fosters learning in a direct sense, as opposed to a distributive system that fosters learning in a more indirect sense. A number of such feedback systems can be contemplated for UNHCR. They range from the preparation of analyses designed to define and recommend policy, to the introduction of processes that encourage the concrete application of lessons learned. The main feedback mechanisms are briefly discussed below:

- the production of synthesis reports The production of synthesis reports represents an important step beyond the mere distribution of evaluation material. It comprises an analytical feedback element that relies not only on past evaluation findings of the Agency concerned, but could also include evaluation findings from other organisations as well as research conclusions by academic and other institutions. In order to be effective as a learning instrument, a synthesis report should have its audience in mind. The audience in UNHCR consists primarily of very busy people, both at Headquarters and in the field. Synthesis reports should, therefore, be brief and concise, formatted in a way that immediately focuses the eye on the essentials, concentrating on the burning questions of the day. Given those conditions, and based on a careful targeting of the client group, synthesis reports could be very powerful instruments towards change. They are highly recommended, and are considered very useful by the international community.
- Retrospective reports of evaluation findings. Annual reports of evaluation findings, combining both central level evaluations as well as self evaluations performed during the past year, constitute a normal part of a vibrant evaluation function. It is important that such annual reports cover both the central evaluation programme as well as the results of evaluations by Bureaux, in order to provide management with an overall view of Agency- wide evaluation activities. These reports, if they are to be of value, should highlight and synthesise findings of evaluations, rather than be merely descriptive in nature. An analytical approach should be accompanied by observations on trends and lessons learned in the evaluation of sectors and themes, operational reviews, mid-term evaluations and end-of-project/phase evaluations. To be even more useful to management, such reports should also mention key recommendations together with any follow-up that has taken place. Certain organisations have commenced the practice of drafting retrospective reports covering five years. This longer time frame would allow a more substantive analysis of issues leading to policy recommendations for top management.
- Institutional linkages. Important feedback processes include the establishment of formal linkages between the evaluation function and potential users or instruments. The following linkages are important for UNHCR to introduce and/or enhance:

Linkage to top management. At the moment evaluation reports are submitted to the Senior Management Committee for review and direction. With the proposed organisational restructuring whereby central evaluation is combined with policy research), submission of

evaluation results to the Policy Committee now seems more logical. This Committee, then, would receive (1) individual central level and self evaluation reports; (2) annual and multi-year retrospective reports of evaluation findings; (3) policy research reports; and (4) annual and longer term evaluation plans including both central level and self evaluation. Decisions that require senior management approval will be referred to the SCM.

Linkage to programme management. Programme management will be linked to evaluation in a number of important ways. In the first place they will be held accountable for implementation of recommendations accepted by the Policy Committee or Senior Management Committee as the case may be. The central evaluation staff will monitor follow-up in this respect. In the second place, programme management will be directly involved in carrying out the recommendations emerging from their own self evaluation activities. Thirdly, there will be a strong ongoing relationship between programme management and the central evaluation staff in terms of participation and guidance of self evaluation efforts. Fourthly, evaluation planning will need to be a co-ordinated exercise whereby programme management is consulted in formulating the central evaluation plan, and the self evaluation plan is merged with the central evaluation plan for consideration by the Policy Committee. Lastly, programme management will participate in periodic retrospective reviews of evaluations results.

Linkage to programme staff. In order to encourage programme planners to use lessons from experience, many donors require staff to identify such lessons in their planning and design documents. This would be a useful practice to introduce in UNHCR, but pre-supposes an effective information retrieval system.

Linkage to Agency guidelines. One of the final purposes of evaluation would be to incorporate lessons learned and best practices into the organisation's manuals and guidelines. In order to reach such a condition of feedback, evaluation would need to be complemented by policy research. The earlier suggestion to combine the two disciplines into one organisational entity is intended to achieve that.

Linkage to training. It is important to consciously create a link between evaluation and training whereby evaluation results can be fed back through training on project design or on special topics or issues.

A viable dissemination and feedback strategy is inseparable from the evaluation function. A number of important practices have been indicated in this and the previous section of the report, with suggestions of basic principles that would need to be observed. There exists a clear preference among UNHCR staff for an automated dissemination system, user friendly, with powerful retrieval options. The installation of such a system is expensive and time consuming. Yet, it deserves serious consideration by management. Other dissemination practices should be introduced with due respect for information overload. Various processes will need to be established that would provide institutional linkages for feedback purposes. *We suggest that a proposal be prepared for consideration of senior management outlining a viable dissemination and feedback strategy for the Agency, using principles and practices discussed above..*

Chapter 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

his review of the current state of evaluation in UNHCR has concentrated on the three main pillars that support the overall function: inspection, central evaluation and self evaluation. Although they approach the function from different vantage points, there exist intimate links among the three, links in terms of annual planning, methodology, dissemination and feedback. One could envisage, for example, an annual evaluation plan for senior management approval that would include the individual plans of each one of the three. Similarly, one could envisage an annual report to senior management analysing results of evaluative activities by all three. Again, individual evaluative activities should conform to a standard methodology as to how evaluations are to be conducted. In addition, dissemination and feedback processes could and should be approached in a very similar fashion, with due regard to the matter of confidentiality and reporting responsibility. Interesting is also the scope that exists for the inspection service to identify areas that should be evaluated more thoroughly either by the central evaluation service or by the Bureaux themselves.

At the same time there is potential for overlap among the three evaluation services, the prevention of which would require careful co-ordination. For example an enhanced inspection function that would encompass not only a management audit but also performance measurement would need to be planned in conjunction with the self evaluation programme of the Bureau concerned, and vice versa. Similarly, an end-of project/phase evaluation may be of interest to both the central evaluation service as well as the self evaluation function.

The analysis revealed a number of strengths and weaknesses. The Inspection Unit has successfully concentrated on efficiency issues with a focus on management audit. Thus far it has not paid much attention to performance of field operations, measuring achievements against objectives. Such enhancement of its role could introduce a more powerful evaluative element into its work. Nor does it formally co-ordinate its work with the internal audit service. More formal contacts between audit and inspection seems useful in view of the potential that exists for overlap, the scope for complementarity inherent in the two operations, and the need for consultation on annual programmes and strategies.

The central evaluation function has, over the years, managed to produce a number of hard hitting evaluative studies. However, central evaluation has been seriously undermined by a lack of staff and financial resources. Insufficient resources lie at the root of a number of problems that affect central evaluation planning, performance, methodology and feedback. Enhancement can be envisaged in the planning process of an evaluation programme, a process that should be based on a longer time horizon than has been the case thus far. The way in which individual evaluations are carried out should be subjected to a more standardised methodological approach that would benefit both the quality of findings and recommendations, as well as the way in which this information is disseminated and fed back into policy, strategy, operations, guidelines and training. Dissemination and feedback systems are currently in a very embryonic state and, with additional staff resources, one could envisage substantial improvements in these areas.

Formal evaluation by the Bureaux of their own activities is uncommon, and suffers from an absence of an evaluation and learning culture. In addition, project planning and monitoring systems are currently not supportive of an evaluation process, and are lacking in an analytical methodology that would allow measurement of achievements against objectives.

The enhancement of the evaluation function, and the fostering of learning in the Agency, should be based on an approach that recognises the interdependence of systems and procedures. More specifically, the creation of a self evaluation process in the Bureaux cannot be divorced from the enhancement of the central evaluation function. Evaluation planning and methodology, the dissemination and feedback of results, policy research, as well as the supportive systems of project planning and monitoring contribute to a holistic process ultimately serving learning. In order to introduce a learning culture in the Agency, it will be necessary to make improvements on a variety of fronts simultaneously, avoiding the error of piecemeal adjustments.

Before useful results can be produced that could lead to learning, it will be necessary to create an enabling structure that allows evaluation to take place efficiently and effectively. Of key importance is the right organisational placement for the evaluation function. For central evaluation this placement would see the amalgamation of the Centre for Documentation and Research with the Central Evaluation Unit. For self evaluation, the right organisational placement would involve the creation of the position of evaluation co-ordination officer attached to the Director's office of the Bureau. Other pre-conditions for a viable evaluation function in the Agency would involve sufficient staff and sufficient financial resources. In addition, all evaluations and performance or operational reviews would benefit greatly from an enhanced planning and monitoring system.

With the establishment of the right pre-conditions, enhancement of evaluation in the Agency would need to concentrate on certain systemic and procedural improvements that have been described in this report. Of key importance are the introduction of enhanced evaluation planning and methodology, and the establishment of a viable dissemination and feedback system. The fostering of various close linkages between evaluation and other systems and procedures in the Agency is essential if a learning culture is to be developed in the Agency. The following recommendations are offered:

- 1. Consideration should be given to the amalgamation of the Central Evaluation Unit with the Centre for Documentation and Research in order to enhance learning and policy formulation in the Agency.*
- 2. Four additional evaluation positions need to be created in the Central Evaluation Unit, three at the P4 level and one at the P3 level (making it five in total), accompanied by the creation of at least two support positions, one secretarial, the other clerical. With quality of expertise being the main criterion, the scope for internal re-deployment to fill these positions should be explored.*
- 3. An Evaluation Co-ordination Officer should be appointed on a pilot basis, in a staff capacity, to the Director's office in each of the following Bureaux: (i) Central East and West Africa; (ii) Europe (including Yugoslavia); and (iii) Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. With quality of expertise being the main criterion, the scope for internal shifts in responsibility to fill these positions needs to be explored.*
- 4. An annual Central Evaluation budget, to be used exclusively for outsourcing, should be established at the US \$0.5 million level.*
- 5. An annual allocation for outsourcing and administration of US \$200,000 should be made available to each one of the three Bureaux selected for the pilot phase of the self evaluation function, until such time when an evaluation budget can be built into an enhanced project/programme planning system.*
- 6. The Inspection Service should move beyond its current focus on*

management audit and introduce the concept of performance measurement which reviews achievements against objectives; it should also subject the relationship between inspection and internal audit to a more formal process than exists now.

7. *A long term evaluation strategy should be drafted that would guide the overall evaluation function of the Agency and form the basis for an annual evaluation plan incorporating both central evaluation as well as self evaluation.*
8. *Sources of evaluation expertise should become more diversified: (i) a carefully screened roster of private sector evaluation consultants should be established as a basis for increased use of private sector expertise; (ii) the scope for more joint evaluations should be actively explored; (iii) participatory evaluations with partners should be undertaken.*
9. *An Evaluation Manual should be prepared that provides standards for project and programme evaluation in order to guide the overall evaluation function in the Agency. In addition, the Manual should identify clearly the key linkages between evaluation and other systems and procedures that need to be fostered in the Agency.*
10. *A study should be conducted to design and cost a structured automated evaluation retrieval system to allow staff user friendly desk top access to evaluation findings and lessons learned.*
11. *A comprehensive dissemination and feedback strategy should be drafted for management approval, using principles and practices outlined in this report.*
12. *The findings of this report, including its recommendations, should be submitted to member countries with a view to obtaining their concurrence with the suggested approach, and ascertaining availability of additional resources, if required.*

ANNEXES

Annex One

UNHCR Central Evaluation Function

Proposed Work Breakdown Structure

(A) Conduct Agency-wide Evaluations

A-1 Prepare an Agency-wide Annual Evaluation Plan to be submitted to management, based on anticipated central level evaluations as well as the self evaluations planned by the Bureaux.

A-2 Provide comprehensive analyses of country operations and regional activities, cross-cutting themes and other special issue of an operational and functional nature which are of Agency-wide significance.

A-3 Identify financial and staff resources for central-level evaluations, with due regard for the required scope of work, the type and quality of expertise needed, and the high degree of objectivity desired.

A-4 Manage the work of individual consultants engaged in central-level evaluations, with specific emphasis on the preparation of a work plan, the use of the right methodology, the process of

conducting the study, and the quality and format of reporting.

(B) Participate in Other Evaluations

B-1 Participate, where desirable, in self-evaluations conducted by the Bureaux.

B-2 Participate in joint evaluations with partners, donors or other Agencies upon invitation and where desirable.

(C) Emphasise Evaluation Methodology.

C-1 Develop and provide methodological approaches to evaluations and produce relevant material such as handbooks and guidelines that will introduce certain standards of quality.

C-2 Provide training and guidance to other evaluation efforts in the Agency, and offer commentary on evaluation work plans and draft reports in order to enhance methodological approaches.

C-3 Stay up-to-date on methodological approaches introduced in multilateral and bilateral fora for possible adoption in the Agency.

(D) Provide Policy and Strategic Advice to Management

D-1 In close co-operation with the Policy Research Unit of the Centre for Documentation and Research, submit to Management the results of individual evaluations and policy research, clearly formulating policy decisions that need to be made and strategic action that needs to be taken.

D-2 In close collaboration with the Policy Research Unit of the Centre for Documentation and Research, submit to management, on an annual basis, a synthesis of evaluation and policy research findings, clearly identifying issues that require a policy decision.

(E) Disseminate Findings

E-1 In conjunction with the Centre for Documentation and Research, act as the central repository for Agency-wide evaluation and policy research findings.

E-2 In conjunction with the Centre for Documentation and Research, develop and maintain an electronic learning system (on-line and CD ROM) that provides UNHCR staff with Agency-wide evaluation results and policy research studies, allowing retrieval in ways that would facilitate a sharing of experience, lessons learned and best practices.

E-3 Ensure distribution of evaluative material throughout the Agency with specific emphasis on required transparency and the needs of special stakeholders, including the Executive Committee, management and partners.

E-4 Respond to enquiries originating from within or outside the Agency concerning central-level evaluation results.

E-5 Assume responsibility for other dissemination and learning techniques, including special conferences, ad hoc presentations,

discussion groups, and periodic special publications providing a synthesis of specific key findings.

(F) Follow Up on Decisions Taken

F-1 Monitor the adoption of change resulting from accepted recommendations in central level evaluations.

F-2 Provide periodic reports to management concerning progress in the implementation of accepted central level evaluations.

Annex Two

Proportionate Use of Evaluation Specialists during 1997 and 1998

Proportionate Use of Evaluation Specialists during 1997 and 1998

(percentage Involvement)

| Title | IES Staff ^{1/} Field Work participation | IES Staff: ^{1/} data collection (dc) ; editing (ed) | HCR Staff seconded to IES | HCR Staff : HQ / Field | Consultant / Former HCR staff | Consultant / Retired HCR staff: data collection (dc) editing (ed) | Consultant / No former employment link | Staff or consultant of other agencies/ govts. |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Evaluations conducted in 1997. | | | | | | | | |
| Staff Stress and security: a management challenge for UNHCR. | | 20 (ed) | | | | 40 | 40 | |
| Review of UNHCR's phase out strategies: case studies in selected countries of origin. | 20 | 20 (ed) | | | | | 60 | |
| Refugee Security in camps. | | | 100 | | | | | |
| Review of UNHCR's implementing arrangements. | | 10 (ed) | 90 | | | | | |
| Review of UNHCR's project staff arrangements. | | | 30 | | | 70 | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Evaluation of UNHCR's efforts on behalf of children and adolescents. | 5 | 5 (ed) | 20 | | 50 | | | 20 |
| Consultant / No former employment link | IES Staff <u>1/</u> Field Work participation | IES Staff: <u>1/</u> data collection (dc) editing (ed) | HCR Staff seconded to IES | HCR Staff: HQ / Field | Consultant / Former HCR staff | Consultant/ Retired HCR staff: data collection (dc) editing (ed) | Consultant / No former employment link | Staff or consultant of other agencies/ govts. |
| WFP/UNHCR Joint Evaluation Mission: Emergency food assistance to returnees, refugees, displaced persons and other war-affected populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. | | 5 (ed) | 30 | | | | | 65 |
| Review of UNHCR's refugee education activities. | 20 | 10 (ed) | | 10 (hq) | 60 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluations completed / planned in 1998. | | | | | | | | |
| Review of UNHCR's assistance to older refugees. | 10 | | | | 90 | | | |
| UNHCR's mass information activities. | 50 | 5 (dc) | 20 | 5 (hq) | | 20 (ed) | | |
| The problem of access to land and ownership in repatriation operations. | | | 60 | 10 (field) | | 30 (ed) | | |

| Title | IES Staff <u>1/</u> Field Work participation | IES Staff: <u>1/</u> data collection (dc) editing (ed) | HCR Staff seconded to IES | HCR Staff: HQ / Field | Consultant / Former HCR staff | Consultant / Retired HCR staff: data collection (dc) editing (ed) | Consultant / No former employment link | Staff or consultant of other agencies/govts. |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Evaluation of UNHCR training activities. | | | 50 | | | 50 | | |
| Review of UNHCR's Mali/Niger repatriation efforts. | | | | | 95 | 5 (ed) | | |
| Review of policy compliance in UNHCR. | 50 | | 40 | | | 10 (ed) | | |
| UNHCR's rehabilitation activities in the Great Lakes Region. | | 10 (dc) | 50 | 10 | | 30 (ed) | | |
| Report of the Tripartite (UNICEF/UNHCR/WFP) study of the Great Lakes emergency operation. | | 5 (ed) | 20 | | | | | 75 |
| Evaluation of the UNHCR Housing Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. | | | 95 | | | 5 (ed) | | |
| Implementation of UNHCR's strategy in the European Union. | | 10 (dc) | 80 | | | | | |

Source: IES/29-9-98

Annex 3

Evaluation Follow-Up Activities

[Editor's Note: Annex 3 not included for technical reasons]

Annex 4

Evaluation Matrix

| Issues | Major Questions | Sub-Questions | Objectively Verifiable Indicators | Sources of Data | Methods of Data Collection |
|--------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Rationale | (Questions related to the continued relevance of the goal of the project or programme) | (Breakdown of the major questions) | (Related to rationale) | (For example, reports, statistics, individuals, sites, etc) | (For example, interviews, sample surveys, site inspections, focus group meetings, etc) |
| Efficiency | (Questions related to management of the project or programme) | (Breakdown of the major questions) | (Related to inputs and outputs) | (as above) | (as above) |
| Effectiveness | (Questions related to the objectives of the project or programme) | (Breakdown of the major questions) | (Related to the achievement of objectives) | (as above) | (as above) |
| Impact | (Questions related to the longer term results of the project or programme) | (Breakdown of the major questions) | (Related to the achievement of longer term results) | (as above) | (as above) |

NOTES

Part I

1. Document EC/SC.2/70
2. Inspection Handbook, second edition, 1997, p.1
3. Reference document EC/SC.2/70 dated 16 September 1994, entitled "Internal Oversight Mechanisms: Establishment of an Inspection and Evaluation Service", Annex 1
4. See "Inspection Handbook", second edition, October, 1997, prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Service.
5. Ibid, page 1.
6. UNHCR Manual, Chapter 4, Programme and Project Management, December 1995 (including any revisions up until April 1998), Section 3.3 "Objective-Setting".
7. Ibid., Annex 8.3
8. Memorandum of Understanding between the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), dated April, 29, 1997.
9. Ibid., first para.
10. A Logical Framework Analysis is a planning tool that facilitates the measurement of results. As such, it is not an evaluation tool in the strict sense of the word.
11. Most donors now place a strong emphasis on results-based management. See, for example, "Results-Based Management in CIDA, Policy Statement" Performance Review Division, CIDA.

12. See, for example, the recent OMS Working Paper entitled " Planning in UNHCR's New Operations Management System: Enhancing Programme and Project Design with the Logical Framework and UNHCR "Best Practice" Planning Methodology" (published in 1998).

13. The recent practice of objectives setting under the Career Management System (CMS) could, to some extent, alleviate the problem. But the CMS pales in comparison to the discipline that a LFA planning process would offer.

14. An interesting example of this type would be the excellent evaluative study performed by the Policy Research Unit of CDR entitled "Rebuilding a War-torn Society, A Review of the UNHCR Reintegration Programme for Mozambican Returnees" an unrestricted document dated July, 1996.

15. See the informative paper "Evaluation in the OMS" dated July 17, 1998, drafted by the OMS Change Management Team

16. For example, the Division of Financial and Management Services is currently engaged in a training effort of field staff that puts strong emphasis on planning.

17. See also our previous discussion on planning in this respect

18. It should be noted, however, that compensatory action was taken by PCS in organising management training from the mid 1990s onward, which emphasised planning as the basis of UNHCR's work in operations.

19. See the OMS working paper entitled "Monitoring in the Operations Management System", page 6.

20. One could also categorise as a brand of self evaluation the 788 special technical studies performed for the Bureaux by the Programme and Technical Support Section of DOS since the early 1980s.

Part II

1. "Report of the Executive Committee Temporary Working Group to the Extraordinary Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme", Extraordinary Session, 28-30 May, 1990, Doc. A/AC.96/742.

2. "A proposed Strategy for Strengthening the Evaluation Function", Central Evaluation Section, July, 1992.

3. "Canadian International Development Agency Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", Synthesis Report, Universalialia, September 30, 1992, page 42.

4. "Review of the Evaluation Capacities of Multilateral Organisations", in undertaken by external consultants on behalf of the Australian Agency for International Development, Executive Summary, 1998.

5. See, for example, the recent discussion paper by the Evaluation Unit entitled "Strengthening the Evaluation Function in UNHCR", as well as various studies on the subject done within the context of the Delphi project and, more recently, by the OMS change management team.

6. "CIDA Evaluation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees", Synthesis Report, Universalialia, September 30, 1992, page 42.

7. It should be remembered that a self evaluation budget for the Bureaux could

be built into the annual planning documents beginning with the year 2000, consistent with the new planning format recommended by the OMS change management team.

8. Because of the relative novelty of the LFA planning approach in UNHCR, one would be well advised to introduce a simple version containing the traditional 16 boxes of the matrix, rather than a more sophisticated (and complicated) version containing 25 boxes.

9. See for example the DAC document "A review of Donors' Systems for Feedback from Aid Evaluation", OECD, DAC (89) 12, May 31, 1989. See also "CIDA, An Evaluation Dissemination Strategy, A Position Paper Prepared for the Management of the Evaluation Branch, Policy Division", Anema/Burkart, 1990