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EVALUATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS: UNHCR'S PLAN AND ACTIVITIES

1. This report provides a brief update on activities undertaken by the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) in 2005 and outlines the work plan for the rest of the year, as well as proposals to revise UNHCR's Evaluation Policy.

I. REPORTS PRODUCED IN 2005

2. During 2005, as of July EPAU has published the following evaluations, tools and reviews:

- a) Refugee livelihoods: Enhancing livelihood security among Mauritanian refugees: Northern Senegal: a case study;
- b) How to manage evaluations: Seven steps;
- c) Organizing participatory self-evaluations at UNHCR: Guidelines;
- d) The state of UNHCR's organization culture;
- e) Evaluation of the Protection Learning Programme;
- f) Refugee health in Zambia: Joint UNHCR-WHO evaluation of health and health programmes in refugee camps in Zambia;
- g) The road to health and the road to Afghanistan: Joint UNHCR-WHO evaluation of health and health programmes for Afghan refugees in Pakistan;
- h) Refugee health in Nepal: Joint UNHCR-WHO evaluation of health and health programmes in Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal;
- i) UNHCR's age and gender mainstreaming pilot project 2004: Synthesis report (Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Greece, India, Syria, Venezuela and Zambia);

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- j) Consistent and predictable responses to IDPs: A review of UNHCR's decision-making processes;
- k) From emergency evacuation to community empowerment: Review of the repatriation and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone.

II. WORK PLAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2005

3. EPAU is currently working on the following projects which are due to be completed by the end of 2005 or early 2006:

- a) Revision of UNHCR's urban refugee policy;
- b) Review of the fast track in UNHCR;
- c) Evaluation of UNHCR's protection staffing capacity;
- d) Evaluation of UNHCR's Protection Information Section;
- e) Joint UNHCR-NRC evaluation of Norwegian Refugee Committee secondments;
- f) Joint UNHCR-WFP evaluation of pilot food distribution in five countries (Pakistan, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Kenya);
- g) Update and follow-up to the 2004 evaluation of UNHCR's Medical Service;
- h) Optimizing service to the Field: The role of the desk (in conjunction with OIOS-Audit's comparative review of the desk function);
- i) Evaluation of UNHCR's vehicle fleet around the world.

4. The work plan for 2006 will be established in the fall of 2005 on the basis of wide consultations with all stakeholders.

III. UNHCR'S EVALUATION POLICY

5. Following a Canadian-funded review of EPAU in 2002, UNHCR elaborated and adopted an Evaluation Policy which came into effect on 1 January 2003. This policy has since been implemented, albeit with distinct shortcomings due to a lack of capacity.

6. This lack of capacity affects in particular the Office's ability to:

- a) meaningfully train staff in evaluation, maintain a roster and call on trained staff for managing certain evaluations and their follow-up (validation and implementation);
- b) design, roll out and manage an organization-wide practice of self-evaluation;
- c) incorporate evaluation into the Career Management System competencies;
- d) develop further, maintain and actively exploit a database, including implementation of a follow-up system to recommendations contained in evaluation reports and carrying out of meta-evaluations;

- e) incorporate lessons learned in organizational learning, both formal and informal;
- f) contribute to an active knowledge-management platform on the intranet;
- g) create and maintain an up-to-date consultants' roster, including serious professional evaluation of their performance;
- h) actively participate in evaluation networking and inter-agency initiatives.

IV. POLICY ANALYSIS

7. With the dissolution of the Centre for Documentation on Refugees (1984-2000) the research and policy analysis functions were transferred to EPAU, however without the corresponding capacities. Policy analysis has since been carried out essentially within the context of evaluations and reviews in support of policy decisions. Indeed evaluations invariably address or touch upon policy questions. Further efforts must be made to hone this function and re-create the required capacity, as both the need for policy analysis and the acknowledgement that UNHCR currently lacks this capacity are widely recognized both inside and outside the organization.

V. PROPOSED REVISION OF UNHCR'S EVALUATION POLICY

8. The United Nations system-wide agreed Norms and Standards for Evaluation were required under General Assembly A/RES/59/250 of December 2004 and were adopted unanimously by the United Nations Evaluation Group in April 2005.

9. As a first step, EPAU (like its counterparts in the United Nations system) is currently assessing its own practices and reviewing UNHCR's Evaluation Policy of 2002, as well as the institutional framework, in order to meet this quality bar. This includes a corresponding revision of UNHCR's Evaluation Policy to be adopted later in 2005.

10. As a second step, in the course of 2005-2006, EPAU will professionalize its team, in keeping with the aforementioned Norms and Standards. It is recommended that EPAU should be managed by an "experienced generalist", and staffed by a team comprising 50 per cent carefully selected staff on rotation, and at least 50 per cent professional evaluators. The latter should preferably be retained for four to six years and rotated between United Nations agencies to keep the evaluation team fresh and responsive.

11. EPAU will continue to strive to address the aforementioned challenges within the means allocated to the Unit.