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Reports relating to programme and administrative
oversight and evaluation

Evaluation and Policy Development

Report by the High Commissioner

I. INTRODUCTION

1. UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) was established in September 2006 and has been fully staffed since May 2007. The PDES work programme is approved by the High Commissioner (to whom the Service reports) and is formulated in close consultation with the Assistant High Commissioners for Operations and for Protection.

2. Since the 57th session of the Executive Committee in October 2006, the work of PDES has focused on five principal themes, details of which are provided in this paper. All of the reports referred to in the paper can be accessed on the PDES page of UNHCR's website.

II. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

3. At the request of the High Commissioner, PDES led an extensive consultative process with UNHCR staff and other stakeholders, leading to the preparation of a paper entitled "Policy framework and implementation strategy: UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced inter-agency response to the protection of internally displaced persons." Following the completion of this paper, PDES, working in tandem with the IDP Advisory Team, embarked upon a series of Real-

Time Evaluations (RTEs), focusing on five operations for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in which the cluster approach or cluster-like arrangements have been activated.

4. The RTEs are intended to enhance UNHCR's understanding of how it is fulfilling its cluster responsibilities, to learn lessons from its performance in this area and to make immediate recommendations for change in the programmes concerned. The RTEs also provide an opportunity for PDES and IDP Advisory Team staff to conduct workshops in the Field on humanitarian reform and the cluster approach.

5. The reports of these evaluations (covering Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda) have been placed in the public domain of UNHCR's website. A synthesis of findings and recommendations from the five evaluations has also been made available to members of the Executive Committee. All of these documents have been made available to OCHA, which is leading an inter-agency evaluation of the cluster approach, for which PDES acts as UNHCR's focal point.

6. In addition to the activities described above, PDES has been engaged in an analysis of several humanitarian issues, including UNHCR's experience in integrated UN missions, the experience of UNHCR and other humanitarian actors with remote management and cross-border operations, and the concept of 'humanitarian space'. PDES commissioned and published an independent evaluation of UNHCR's response to the Tsunami emergency in South and South-East Asia, and undertook an RTE of UNHCR's response to the Lebanon crisis. A PDES staff member acted as Secretary to the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in Neighbouring Countries, held in Geneva in April 2007.

III. REINTEGRATION AND PEACEBUILDING

7. In February 2007, PDES assisted the Peacebuilding, Livelihoods and Partnership Section to organize a workshop on "UNHCR's role in post-conflict situations: recalibrating reintegration in an evolving context." The International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank participated in this initiative. The results of that workshop were used as the basis for a draft paper entitled "Policy framework and implementation strategy: UNHCR's role in support of the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons."

8. It is anticipated that this paper will be finalized and disseminated later in the year. PDES is planning to test and refine the policy by undertaking a number of evaluations of UNHCR reintegration programmes. At the same time, PDES will undertake a review of UNHCR's role in protection and the rule of law in post-conflict and transitional situations.

IV. REFUGEE PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

9. PDES has acted as UNHCR's focal point for a number of structures and processes relating to international migration, including the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development; the Global Migration Group (which was chaired by UNHCR during the

second half of 2006); the Global Forum on Migration and Development; and the biennial high-level meeting between UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration.

10. In the context of the initiatives identified above, PDES prepared two papers, one entitled “Refugee protection and international migration: the role of UNHCR”, and the other on “Forced migration and development.” Both papers have been placed in the public domain of the website. PDES is substantively engaged in the development of UNHCR’s policy on mixed migratory movements, and is undertaking a review of state practice in relation to the treatment of separated and unaccompanied children in the context of such movements.

V. THE PROTECTION OF REFUGEES AND OTHER PERSONS OF CONCERN

11. PDES has commissioned an independent evaluation of UNHCR’s role in preventing and responding to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in situations of forced displacement. The evaluation will be completed in the first half of 2008.

12. In addition, the Service has undertaken a study of UNHCR’s role in protracted refugee situations; is assisting the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS) in the finalization of a UNHCR policy on refugees in urban areas; and is leading an initiative to examine the role of UNHCR in relation to victims of natural disasters and environmental displacement.

13. Working in close association with DIPS and the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, PDES is supporting the work of UNHCR’s Field Reference Group on Protection Policies, which will hold its first plenary meeting in September 2007, as well as the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which will convene for the first time in December 2007.

VI. STRENGTHENING THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION FUNCTIONS

14. Continuous steps are being taken to strengthen the policy development and evaluation function in UNHCR. These steps include: the provision of on-the-job and external evaluation training for PDES staff; a review and revision of UNHCR’s evaluation policy, procedures and webpage; the establishment of a Headquarters Policy Development Network; the expansion of the Service’s internship and research associate programme; as well as regular consultations with the Audit Service, the Inspector General’s Office and the Organizational Development and Management Service.

15. PDES represents UNHCR in the United Nations Evaluation Group and other evaluation networks. The Service interacts on a regular basis with evaluation and policy units within and outside the United Nations system, and acts as focal point for UNHCR’s relations with the academic and research communities on non-legal matters. The series “New Issues in Refugee Research” continues to provide an outlet for research on refugee, humanitarian and migration issues, undertaken by UNHCR staff, interns, consultants and associates.