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EVALUATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS UNIT



The community services function in UNHCR

An independent evaluation

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

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Executive summary

Throughout the various sections of this report, whether on promoting refugee self-reliance, coping with refugee vulnerability, supervision and monitoring of Implementing Partners, or implementing key UNHCR policies, we conclude that Community Services (CS) has a crucial role to play which is being thwarted by its current weakness. The option of allowing current trends to continue, to further weakening of this function is not a rational, viable or cost-effective strategy for UNHCR.

CS has a significant part to play in relation to UNHCR's central protection mandate, as well as with respect to implementation of key policies on women and children. Support for and investment in the CS function goes to the heart of the overall effectiveness of UNHCR in meeting its mandate.

CS is crucial to support and strengthen UNHCR's analytical and supervisory capacity. It is key to identifying and addressing field level problems prior to their eruption into international-level scandals about refugee abuse and violation of rights.

CS has many tools at its disposal, including POP and ARC, arsenals of techniques and methods associated with community mobilization and community development, as well as other methods drawn from anthropology and other social science disciplines. Nevertheless, it requires considerable insight, commitment, empathy, negotiating and other inter-personal skills, and life-experience to achieve results. That it is demanding and time-consuming does not mean it should not be attempted, but rather, that the effort to work directly and closely with large at-risk populations, such as refugees, needs to be respected, supported, and given the opportunity to bear results.

If UNHCR is to go beyond simple delivery of inputs, there needs to be considerably more investment in learning about specific social, cultural, political and economic realities of refugee situations. UNHCR and its staff need to invest the time and resources to developing the analytical capacity, tools and systems necessary for refugee operations to achieve stated objectives. To not do so is to jeopardise the credibility of UNHCR as lead agency for refugees.

UNHCR is seriously under-investing in CS

When we speak of weakness, we refer to the declining numbers of CS staff in the field, the wide range of responsibilities they are assigned, and the low level of authority and status of the current CS staff contingent. Most CS staff are hired as national staff at non-professional levels. Most are isolated, low ranking and junior, with insufficient international experience and perspective to carry out the CS mandate. Often they are not given the scope, tools and authority to bring a social and field-based analysis to bear to defining joint UNHCR-IP-refugee priorities and programmes. Many CS staff have little control over their daily work programmes and do not have the profile or the skills and resources required to carry out

independent monitoring of IPs. UNHCR is often in the position of having to rely almost completely on the data and perspectives supplied by IPs about the field situation, and at the same time is expected to monitor the performance of these IPs.

The downward trend in funding and staffing of the CS function has reached the point where CS has been rendered incapable of achieving its mandate or purpose within the organization. This is not to say that some local contexts may not still have some excellent outcomes, particularly where the combination exists of supportive senior management and capable and experienced CS officers and IPs. However, the potential for the CS function to affect the UNHCR culture as a whole, so that such situations become the norm rather than the exception does not presently exist.

CS staff face great challenges in carrying out their mandate in field contexts where the staff for other functions is typically much more senior, frequently with little concept of the purposes or importance of the CS function. The ambiguity with which job descriptions and guidelines related to the CS function are stated, make it difficult to deflect the many additional demands on staff time¹

IPs carrying out CS related tasks often lack the discretionary power to be effective; to take strategic action, or even to efficiently make the day-to-day decisions needed to be responsive to the changing field realities, or to refugee requests and initiatives. Emergency CS staff seconded through Save the Children Norway and Sweden similarly point out the inadequacy of staff follow-up and the lack of continuity with respect to information obtained and initiatives undertaken during the emergency phase.

CS and UNHCR's supervisory and lead-agency role

Many UNHCR staff have a very limited idea of what constitutes 'supervision and monitoring' – these being seen largely as an auditing function and for enforcing compliance with contractual agreements, rather than based on outcomes, improvements and benefits for the refugee population. The CS function needs to develop a comprehensive monitoring and coordination system that will permit UNHCR to have a detailed assessment of the risk factors facing refugee populations and sub-populations, by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, etc.

Some IPs and OPs are questioning the role and capacity of UNHCR as lead agency, where it is felt that UNHCR does not have a sound analysis of the refugee context upon which to base its definition of priorities and coordination role. As more donors and host governments provide direct support to IPs and OPs, UNHCR is thus being forced to adapt its management culture to one based more and more on an effective analytical and coordination capacity.

It is crucial for UNHCR to demonstrate to its partners, including host governments and the donor community, its capacity to provide sound leadership and coordination for the attainment of objectives jointly agreed upon by all partners. This implies a much greater investment in the CS function, with appropriate level personnel –

¹ For instance, to oversee education and health service delivery, to broadly coordinate and monitor the work of IPs; to manage scholarship programmes, and act as focal point reporter for a host of Headquarters-defined functions.

closer to the field, and equipped with the necessary tools to provide a convincing assessment of needs, opportunities and available resources so as to better protect the rights of refugees.

CS and the averting of abuses and scandals

The problems that have emerged in the Nepali camps for Bhutanese refugees², previously touted by UNHCR personnel as 'the best camps in the world', should confirm to UNHCR yet again that it's current capacity for identifying social problems and protection issues at field level is extremely weak, and that even relatively 'well-managed' assistance regimes (well-managed from the point of view of delivering essential goods and services) and primarily legalistic definitions of refugee 'protection', cannot provide for the early identification of the numerous social problems that arise in internment-like refugee situations.

Our findings, based on field missions and interviews with UNHCR and IP staff, suggest that it is only a matter of time before more such 'scandals' erupt, given UNHCR's lack of capacity for early detection and resolution of problems and issues that lead to serious rights violations and exploitation. Low-level national staff who receive little systematic training in how to do social and situation analysis and lack comparative experience of other refugee settings, may simply overlook or be unsure how to address the range of social problems that invariably emerge in protracted refugee situations. These staff require far better training and tools, as well as guidance from more senior professional CS staff to ensure that they are capable and required through job descriptions and work plans, to carry out systematic situation analyses that will form the basis for the assistance programme and protection objectives. As well, CS and other staff typically need to spend much more time in the refugee camps and settlements in order to know what steps to take to address abuses of leadership or other delicate political situations. If UNHCR staff are to help transform refugee committees into viable and trusted political institutions, staff need to be capable of generating an analysis of the local social and political situation.

CS and the protection mandate

The social aspects of UNHCR's protection work is actually what CS staff do, although this fact is not generally recognised by colleagues or rendered explicit in CS's own guidelines. Whether through participatory processes and community-based structures, through the targeting of assistance or self-reliance initiatives, the objective of the CS function is to ensure that basic physical, social and economic entitlements are accessible equally by all members of the refugee population.

The validity of the concept of 'social protection' is not that it adds anything new in the way of rights, policies or guidelines. Rather that it moves towards operationalising these by providing a clearer orientation for the CS function, and a clearer sense of the parameters that must shape its work. In the context of financial constraints, CS programmes and social interventions must be justified on the basis of

² On November 13-14, 2002, a seven-member international team, which includes protection, community services, management and external relations Officers, arrived in Kathmandu and deployed to the camps in eastern Nepal to investigate indications of sexual and gender-based violence in camps for Bhutanese refugees.

enhanced refugee protection in the field, more than on a standard set of activities that are typically carried out in all refugee situations, or required by Headquarters. A Social Protection identity for CS is simply a better descriptor of what the function does, or should do, in conjunction with Protection staff, on behalf of the Office.

CS and UNHCR priorities for women and children

Our findings support those of the 2002 Children's evaluation that emphasise the limited ability of current UNHCR planning and management procedures to adequately reflect and address emerging social and protection needs, and to identify priorities and adjust spending in line with changing field-based realities.

A growing body of evidence suggests that experienced Professional CS Officers at appropriate levels within country operations provide the best and most cost-effective means of attaining gender and child-protection objectives identified in respective Guidelines. The common resources available to the CS function, Gender Unit/Advisors, and Children's Unit/Advisors must be provided in complementary and coordinated manner to strengthen country operations that urgently require more and better gender and age-based analysis and programme planning and delivery. Donors who strongly support enhanced UNHCR performance in these areas should take note that overall compliance with the policies on women and on children is not likely to improve without a serious investment in professional staff at levels closer to the field, and without major adjustments to UNHCR's planning and management approaches - away from top-down decision-making and towards country and field-level strategies more closely linked to refugee circumstances and protection problems.

CS can help to change the internal culture of UNHCR

Generally speaking, the dominant mode within UNHCR is top-down, paternalistic, and compliance oriented. Monitoring is carried out to some extent in relation to what has been delivered, but very little with respect to differential risks and access, or in regard to the effectiveness or impacts of assistance and programming. Programmes and inputs change little in response to needs assessments or field based analyses. When a scandal of some type is impending, UNHCR attempts to contain it, and to respond with extra-ordinary measures. It should rather ensure that the level of assistance and knowledge about the local situation is adequate to avert the dysfunctional state of affairs that lead to large-scale abuses, suffering and international outrage.

At present, while numerous UNHCR policy and guidelines documents highlight the importance of refugee community involvement, mobilisation and participatory processes, in practice UNHCR staff is increasingly distanced from the field by the demands from higher levels within the organisation. UNHCR and its donors need to strengthen the CS function, and allow it to operate so as to help to change UNHCR's internal culture and management style - to both force and assist the organization to become more bottom up, more based in local contexts, and more cognizant of the refugee population's needs and potential contribution.

The need for routine situation analyses at field level

To routinely carry out situation analyses should be integral to the CS role, resulting in a field-generated, protection-oriented country operations plan. The Situation Analysis tool that forms a part of the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) training and tool-kit could easily be adapted from its present orientation primarily towards enhancing child-centred analysis and protection, to application to refugee populations as a whole.

Based on the findings of this, and other recent evaluations, we find that systematic and routine Situation Analysis would be a cost-effective approach to the urgent need for better and more relevant planning and monitoring of field and country operations. Such a process is central to ensuring the long-term credibility of UNHCR as lead agency and coordinator of refugee operations. The strategic plan must be justified in terms of the key protection priorities identified at both the community and country level. All actors would also identify their specific roles and resources for enhancing refugee protection – along with timelines for achieving specific objectives. Depending on the refugee context, an annual situation analysis would permit UNHCR to have up-to-date information on emerging trends within the refugee population, and form a solid basis for programme and protection monitoring, adjustment, and self-evaluation.

Professional CS staff with social science backgrounds and training in social and participatory research techniques are best placed to facilitate situation analysis on behalf of the office. Further, the rationale for Situation Analysis is directly related to that of the CS function itself: to ensure that all groups and segments of the refugee population have access to appropriate protection, assistance and services. Our field missions reveal that Protection Officers and other staff within UNHCR currently have little time or capacity to engage in sustained or extensive community mobilisation, or to carry out social analyses. The predominantly legal function of Protection staff and the predominantly social function of CS staff must complement each other, rather than everyone trying to do the same thing.

It should be evident or made so to donors that UNHCR's CS capacity has been seriously jeopardised by years of budgetary neglect and staffing cuts. Donors who support UNHCR's policy priorities regarding refugee women and children should be aware that current resource levels to perform the CS function, both in Headquarters and the field, are inadequate to meet the Office's policy objectives. The ability of the Office to develop innovative and responsive protection and assistance measures, grounded in the realities of refugee women, men and children, requires enhanced staffing, tools and resources specifically designated to strengthen UNHCR's CS function.

A large number of more specific conclusions and recommendations are provided throughout the report.³ Many are directed at how the CS function could be enhanced and strengthened within UNHCR. The investment needed in the CS function is not only a financial one. Needless to say, the activities identified will require human and financial resources well beyond the current capacity of the CS Unit in Headquarters. Many of these are urgently required to strengthen the capacity of the CS function in

³ Most of these recommendations have been provided in bold type and specially marked with a small arrow, to facilitate their easy identification.

the field. What remains to be seen is the level of commitment of senior management and the donor community and whether the legacy of neglect of CS will continue or adequate measures taken to augment and re-orient this crucial function.

Introduction and background

1. This is the report of an independent evaluation of UNHCR's Community Services function, carried out by CASA Consulting of Montreal Canada on behalf of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU).
2. In focusing on a "function" rather than a programme or project, this is not a typical evaluation. Unlike the recent evaluations of UNHCR's efforts with regard to protection of women and children, this evaluation is not specifically about compliance with a set of policies or guidelines. To the extent that the scope and objectives of this function are not very clear, the evaluation is also not directly an assessment of impact or explicit objectives achievement. In fact, one of the central questions concerns what is indeed included within the parameters of "Community Services." The terms of reference ask, "Does UNHCR have a clearly defined Community Services policy, strategy and priorities?" It asks about appropriateness of these definitions, policies and strategies; and whether they are adequately staffed and supported, and linked with other UNHCR activities and policies. The relation of Community Services activities with the recently established "Community Development Policy," itself a rather wide ranging and ill-defined "policy" within UNHCR, is also part of the agenda of this evaluation. (For Evaluation Terms of Reference, see Appendix 1).
3. Throughout, it has been difficult to limit the scope of the evaluation, as the Community Services function is very much related to how UNHCR fulfils its overall mandate. Hence, it has not been easy to limit interviews and discussions, and we have sometimes had to make comments or include in discussion other functions of the Office, and aspects of UNHCR operations that were not primarily the focus of this assessment.

Overview of community services

4. According to a 1996 document, "Community Services in UNHCR, An Introduction,"

"What distinguishes community services from other assistance activities is the focus on improving the refugees own capacity to meet their needs and solve their own problems. This may involve methods drawn from the fields of social work, education and training and community development."
5. In the "forward" to this document, it is stated that the response to a refugee emergency should go "*beyond the provision of material relief*" to address refugees'

"social, human and emotional needs, and help to heal psychological wounds. Helping people to help themselves and to help others goes to the heart of the community services approach."

6. These guidelines speak of support being provided in a “structured and well-planned manner, reaching and giving priority to those who need it most.” “Basic Principles for community services” are provided which make reference to certain “fundamental principles about human beings.” They make reference to the dignity and worth of individuals, the duty of persons to help others, a person’s entitlement to help and to a full human life. “The goal of Community Services is self-help.”

7. While we will be discussing the language, definitions, guidelines, and content of Community Services in detail in other parts of this report, it should be noted here, that we are talking about an activity distinguished by its orientation or approaches to working with refugee populations, and usually expressed in normative, abstract and idealistic language.

8. Community Services (CS) is a UNHCR staffing category, with various positions defined as community services officers, assistants, clerks, etc. CS is included at Headquarters (HQ) within the Health and Community Development Section (HCDS), within the Division of Operational Support (DOS). Out of a total of 926 staff at Headquarters, two are currently defined as CS Staff, a P4 as head of the sector, and a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) as assistant. The budget at the disposal of the CS Unit in Headquarters-- for travel, training, preparation of materials, etc. is about \$40,000. In the field there are approximately 100 Community Services staff, mostly national level staff. Some field operations have as many as 6 CS staff. Most have none. CS staff in 2002 made up less than 2 % of all UNHCR staff. At field level, a CS officer may report to Programme staff, Protection staff or directly to the Head of the Office or Sub-Office.

9. As a “function” within UNHCR, CS is not only provided through regular UNHCR CS staff, but also through the work of other UNHCR staff, such as Field staff, through Implementing Partners (IPs), consultants, UN Volunteers and others. During emergencies, short-term CS staff may be seconded through an Emergency Stand-by Arrangement (ESA) with Save the Children Sweden and Norway. In part, this evaluation has tried to ascertain the extent to which the CS function is being carried out, or to what extent the need for such “services” are being met. It has also attempted to assess how effectively the CS function has been implemented, and with what results.

10. Community Services is also associated with a budget category within UNHCR, namely “Sector H.” The Sector H budget for 2002 was \$23,481,911, less than 3% of UNHCR’s total budget for 2002. The extent to which Sector H reflects the scope of Community Services activity within UNHCR is discussed later.

CS scope and background

11. In a 1986 evaluation⁴, staff questioned the appropriateness of the then “Social Services,” function, finding that there was ambiguity and lack of clarity as to its role, confusion over the roles and responsibilities of Social Services personnel, and poor relations between units within UNHCR. Sixteen years later, in 2002, this is very much our conclusion about the renamed function, Community Services.

⁴ UNHCR. 1987. Survey of Social Service Activities.

12. In the early 1980s, the role of Social Services was technical assistance to the field, education services, in-service training, seminar and workshop-organisation, spokesperson for "social concerns" and charged with other administrative tasks such as the distribution of guidelines. Some two decades ago, there were clear reservations about the quality, concreteness, effectiveness and lack of direction with respect to the services and outputs of Social Services staff. (For a brief note on the history of the CS function in UNHCR, see Appendix 2).

13. By the early nineties, a shift of emphasis had transpired in refugee assistance - from individual case management to community-based approaches.⁵ While the scope of the work should have become more focused with this reorientation, CS carries the baggage of the former Social Services, including its broad range of activities and lack of direction. CS staff are generally expected to have similar backgrounds and concerns as the former Social Services staff, and are often expected to carry out the same broad range of activities, as well as all the additional ones entailed in community-based approaches and new initiatives added by the Office.

14. A reading of the various documents published as Community Services guidelines do not provide a clear image of what part of UNHCR work with refugees is in fact Community Services, and what part is the work of other actors. Clear operational or measurable goals and objectives are not generally stated. Similarly, a reading of the guidelines of other sectors do not make clear what part of UNHCR's mandate is recognised as the role of Community Services. Other recent evaluations seem to see Community Services as an implementing arm, for obtaining compliance with official guidelines, and for assuring the "protection" of women and children, for instance. That neither the word "community" nor the word "services" evoke anything specific adds to the confusion – such that no one we spoke with defined the scope and purposes of this function in the same way. (See Appendix 3 for a brief discussion of how the CS function is perceived).

Understanding CS as a UNHCR function

15. Throughout this document we will be discussing CS as a "function." This designation is of some importance. CS is not something that is "delivered" in the sense that food, clothing, fuel or a primary education programme is delivered. It is also not itself a programme or a set of services - such as the camp-level provision of literacy, vocational education, or primary health care. CS is not a technical sector, as education, environment, and engineering are technical, with manuals and guidelines prepared by contingents of technical specialists in HQ. It is closer to, but not exactly a set of methods or approaches in the sense that ARC and POP are widely disseminated staff training tools in UNHCR. CS is also not a "policy" in the way that the guidelines on protection of women and children form policies of UNHCR.

16. Rather CS is a function in the way that financial management, legal protection, programme evaluation and monitoring, and programme delivery are functions carried out by UNHCR and its staff and partners. These functions relate particularly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office in meeting its mandate. If assistance or protection programmes are not appropriately targeted, designed, implemented, and evaluated they will not be effective. If a system of ensuring the legal protection

⁵ UNHCR. 1996. "Community Services in UNHCR: An Introduction."

of refugees is not in place, the mandate of UNHCR is not being carried out. If a system of financial accountability is not in place, the Office will lose both efficiency and effectiveness.

17. Similarly, if refugees, as groups or individuals, cannot access services and assistance provided on their behalf, or do not participate in the design and implementation of service delivery, the Office loses both efficiency and effectiveness. CS has a mandate within UNHCR that is key to the overall effectiveness of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees through carrying out analysis, monitoring and coordination to ensure that refugees, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality or level of physical disability, are not falling through the cracks of protection and assistance activities undertaken by the Office. As evaluators we have independently come to this conclusion.

18. This evaluation demonstrates how this central function is being undermined, and how it may be made more effective.

Evaluation approach and methodology

19. The evaluation, commissioned by EPAU, was carried out by a 5-person team assembled by CASA Consulting of Montreal, with guidance and input from a Steering Committee drawn from a cross-section of fields within UNHCR, and including both donor and NGO representation. The team met with a large number of staff in Headquarters, and reviewed numerous background, policy and evaluation documents and training materials. (For a list of documents reviewed see Appendix 8). Particular attention was given to recent evaluations that are closely related to this one: namely, the 2002 Evaluation of the “Impact of UNHCR’s activities in meeting the rights and protection needs of children,” and the “Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation of UNHCR’s Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on their protection”, as well as those carried out by Christian Outreach Relief and Development (CORD) specifically on its Community Services activities in Tanzania and Zambia.

20. The evaluation team carried out interviews with Save the Children Sweden and Norway coordinators of the Emergency Stand-by Arrangements (ESA), donor government representatives, current and former CS secondments, and UNHCR staff in order to assess the effectiveness of current ESA for the performance of UNHCR’s CS function. A workshop was conducted with some 20 Officers of the Department of International Protection (DIP) in Headquarters, focusing particularly on how they viewed the role and potential CS role within UNHCR, and the relevance of the concept of ‘social protection’ to UNHCR’s mandate.

21. Two electronic surveys were carried out, one sent to all CS staff, and the other to a sample of senior managers at sub-office and branch office levels. (For sample copies of the questionnaire formats used, see Appendix 7). Members of the team attended a workshop on urban refugees, held in Moscow that drew together UNHCR staff from several countries of Eastern Europe, as well as local IPs and Headquarters staff. The evaluation team members visited five countries operations, including Thailand, Nepal, Russia, Zambia, and Uganda. An attempt was made to select the most relevant sites, as defined particularly by Steering Committee members and staff knowledgeable about the issues of the evaluation. The final

selection of sites was determined as much by the ability of the UNHCR country operations to receive another mission as by other factors.

22. Each field mission included visits to refugee camps and settlements, as well as urban refugee programmes. In all settings, discussions were held with Government personnel, UNHCR staff, Implementing partners, and refugee groups and individuals. Workshops with Community leaders, using various types of participatory research methods were conducted. Efforts were made throughout to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on activities, budgets and outputs, and impacts.

Budgets and staffing

23. This chapter provides data and survey findings on budget and staffing trends for the past 12 years with respect to the CS function within UNHCR. It provides trends for UNHCR as a whole, and also for comparison purposes, the trends associated with another function important to the field activities of UNHCR, namely, Protection. The data presented are from UNHCR internal accounting, as well as from published documents, such as The Global Appeal 2002.

24. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the severe decline that this function has seen within UNHCR. While many intimated to us that CS has suffered from the agency-wide budget cuts which have taken place over recent years, most felt there has been no explicit policy to reduce, undercut, or eliminate this function within UNHCR. These objective indicators strongly support arguments made in later sections of this report about the overall scope of CS and the generally low level of support and investment in the CS function.

Table 1: Funding levels for UNHCR, Sector H, and Sector O, in millions of dollars, budgeted and disbursed, 1994 through 2002

Year	Community Services Sector H	Legal Assistance/Protection* Sector O	UNHCR
2002	23.5	51.9	1,012.0
2001	31.2	48.1	896.0
2000	40.4	43.6	824.7
1999	39.6	48.8	1,199.6
1998	25.1	35.3	961.7
1997	27.8	28.8	1,232.1
1996	36.1	39.9	1,404.0
1995	36.9	37.7	1,268.7
1994	29.4	25.2	1,242.2

Source: UNHCR Headquarters figures and Global Appeal, 2002.

25. If we attempt some interpretation of these data on budgets and staffing totally independently of other information, we would conclude that Community Services has been declining in status within UNHCR; that as it loses professional and international staff, and staff at Headquarters, it is likely to be less and less able to develop fresh approaches or to adapt to new realities being identified in the field. It is apparent there are fewer and fewer staff at senior levels able to influence overall policy or direction of UNHCR or its regional and country programs. We would also conclude that this "function" or area of activity has been becoming less and less a priority at UNHCR.

Trends in spending on community services

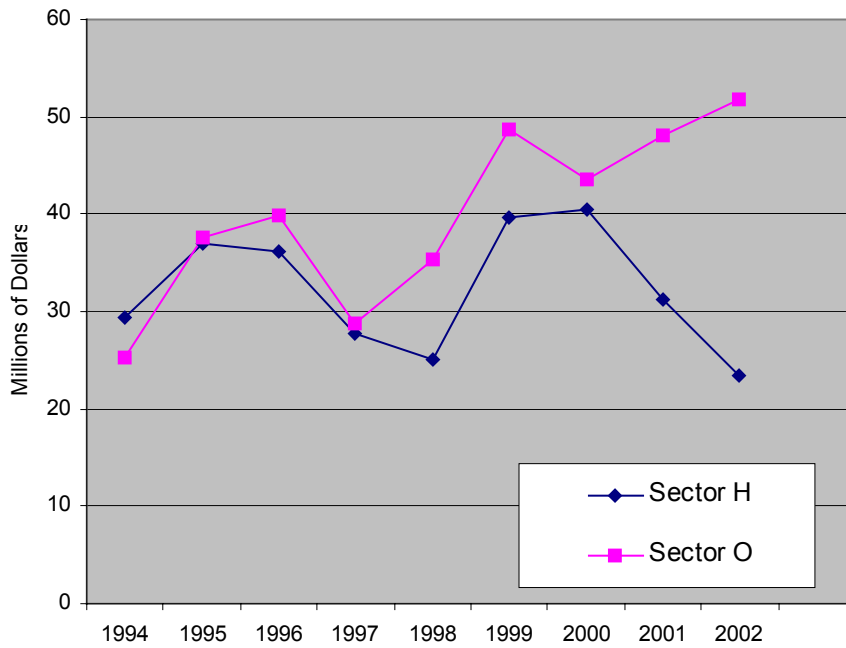
26. UNHCR's budgets and disbursements have declined by about a third (32%) over the period from 1994 through 2002, even though refugee situations have not resolved or declined to this extent. As of January 2001, the total number of persons of concern to UNHCR is 21.1 million.⁶ This number has decreased from a peak of 27

⁶ The number of persons of concern decreased 22% over the period discussed, while the budget decreased 35% over the period (1995-2002).

million in 1995, and is fewer than the 22.5 million recorded in January 2000.⁷ It is safe to say that UNHCR’s funding crisis has implications for the quality of protection and assistance being received by the refugees.

27. During these same nine years the Sector H budget, identified as “Community Services,” first went up nearly 40% and since 2000 has declined by 20% from 1994 levels and by 42% from levels of two years ago to its current level of \$23.5 million. The budget for Sector O, Protection,⁸ has more than doubled since 1994 from \$25.2 million in 1994 to its current \$51.9 million. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Budget Trends, Community Services compared to Protection Services, 1994 to 2002, in millions of dollars



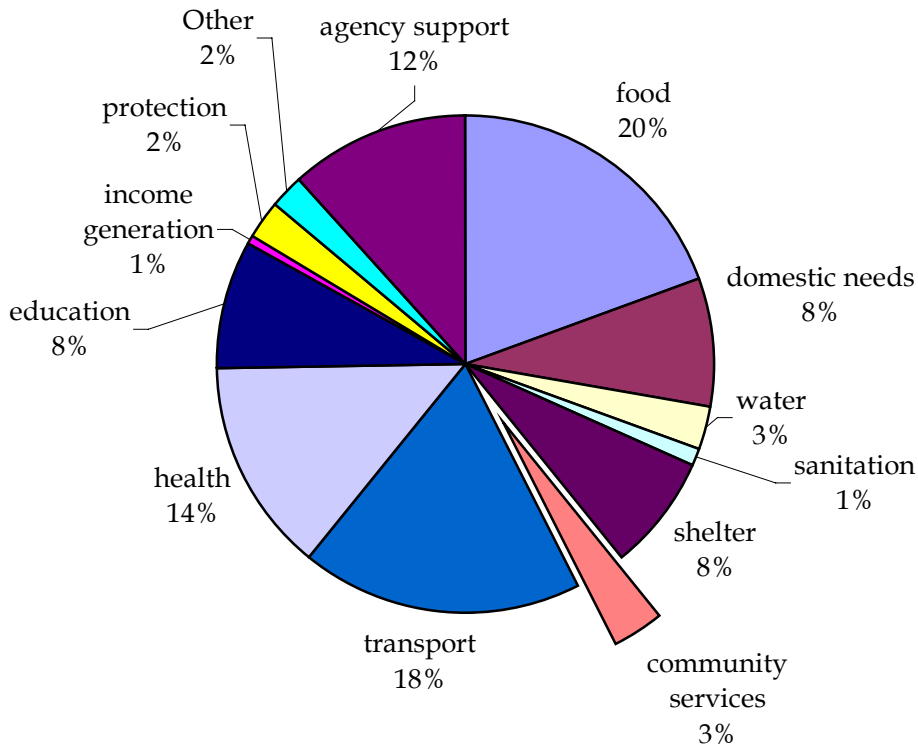
Source: UNHCR Headquarters figures and Global Appeal, 2002.

28. The official CS budget may also be compared to other activities and spending within UNHCR. Figure 2 provides a breakdown comparing CS spending to a number of other budget categories for a selected set of 28 countries in which UNHCR has significant involvement.

⁷ In addition some 8.9 million stateless or potentially stateless cases are also of concern to the Office because their nationality is disputed or unclear. (UNHCR 2002 Global Appeal).

⁸ Legal Assistance/Protection (Sector O) includes: Legal Research, Refugee legal representation, refugee status determination/registry cards, promotion of refugee law/protection, operation of the headquarters Centre for Documentation on Refugees, Refugee travel documents/other document issuance, at-risk children, training/orientation seminar, etc., Other legal assistance activities, sector support/management.

Figure 2: Community Services spending per refugee compared to other spending in selected countries, 2001



Source: Calculated from table compiled by internal UNHCR sources, based on 28 country programmes

29. An examination of what is included in Budget H (See Table 2 and Figure 3) does not result in any kind of comprehensive idea of what the sector is about. The list of sub-sectors within this budget appears to represent a set of activities and categories of recipients or clients historically associated with CS or its predecessor, Social Services. Hence there is a minuscule budget for at-risk children, single-parent families, unaccompanied minors, and the disabled, and services related to culture and recreation, fire prevention/fighting, social work/counselling, and two more ambiguous categories - individual/family support and "other" services. There is another set of categories presumably more related to the "process" of service delivery, namely, planning/ survey/ research/ evaluation, training/ orientation/ seminar, sector support/management, and community development services.

Table 2: Breakdown of Budget H, comparisons of budgeted amounts, 1994 and 2002, in millions of dollars

Activity	Activity Name	1994	2002
H.01	Plan/Survey/Research/Evaluation	\$0.39	\$0.05
H.21	Special S. (Unaccompanied minors)	3.94	0.48
H.22	Special Services (Children)	0.73	1.47
H.23	Special Services (Women)	1.9	1.37
H.24	Special S. (Single-parent families)	-	0.01
H.25	Special Services (Elderly)	0.87	0.30
H.26	Special Services (Disabled)	1.57	0.13
H.27	Mental Health Services	1.11	0.09
H.28	Community Development Services	4.78	11.4
H.29	Cultural/Recreational activities	0.66	0.47
H.30	Fire Prevention/Fighting Services	0.89	0.02
H.31	Social Work Services (Counselling)	6.38	2.36
H.40	At-risk children	-	0.01
H.96	Individual/family support	0.23	2.57
H.97	Training/Orientation/Seminar, etc.	1.07	0.55
H.98	Other Community Services	0.98	0.71
H.99	Sector Support/Management	3.94	1.49
	Total budget for Sector H	29.40	\$23.48

Source: Compiled from internal UNHCR accounting figures

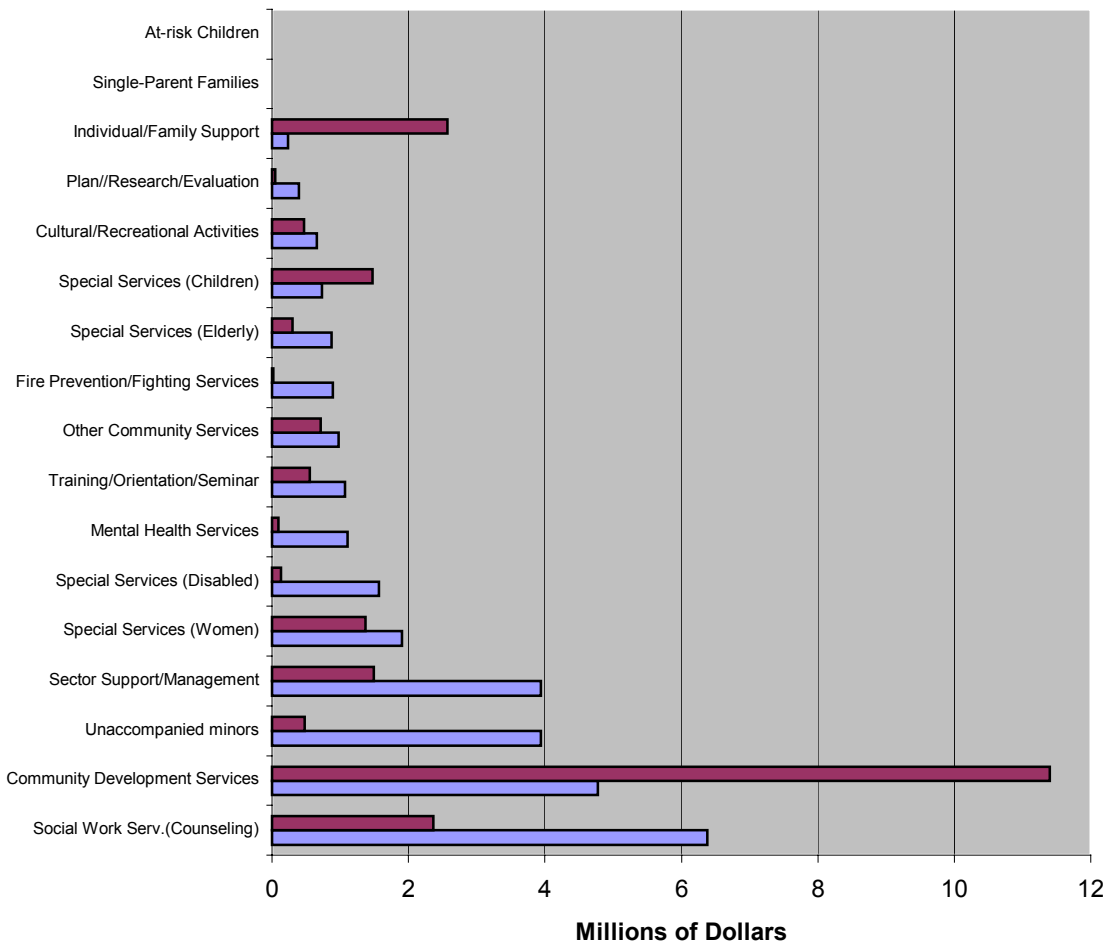
30. It is not surprising that several managers indicated the budget for Community Services has long been treated as a kind of “residual” budget to support activities that do not fit well in other sectors, or even as a type of “slush fund.” In most cases CS staff have no control or even knowledge of how this budget is managed and spent. In 1994, the largest part of the H budget was social work services (counselling) at \$6.4 million, followed by community development services (\$4.8 million), social support/management and special services for unaccompanied minors at \$3.9 million each. As evident in Table 2, and figure 3, these emphases are totally different by 2002, with half of the total budget allocated to community development services. This strongly suggests a change in focus of CS over the past seven years. Another category that has been going up considerably is “individual/family support” which was a rather small part of the budget in 1994 (\$225,793 or less than 1% compared to over 10% in 2002). Special services for children have gone up slightly while the budget for services for women has declined since 1994 (from \$1.9 m to \$1.37m). Other sectors that declined very significantly in terms of the budget between 1994 and 2002 are mental health and fire prevention, at \$1.1 m and \$0.9 m respectively in 1994.

31. Although we have here elaborated the level and breakdown of the sector H budget in some detail, we do not believe it should be used as an interpretation or proxy of the actual level of spending on CS or CS-related programming. In fact, having reviewed several field level budgets, we noted significant items listed under Sector H that would much better have been included in some kind of capital goods or general operational budget.

- **The use of the Sector H budget by country and field operations should be reviewed, to ensure that Sector H actually describes ‘services’ and activities provided to the refugee population, rather than fixed or operating costs of the operation.**

32. We suspect that actual agency-wide spending on CS activities *per se* is likely to be considerably lower than what is currently shown under “Sector H” of the Budget. At the same time, other sector budgets, such as Health, Vocational Training and Household and Domestic Needs may have CS components to them, making the overall level of spending on CS extremely difficult to estimate.

Figure 3: Breakdown of Sector H, Comparison of 1994 to 2002, in millions of dollars (compiled from internal UNHCR sources).



Trends in staffing of community services

33. Over the past 12 years on which numerical data were gathered, the numbers of CS staff have declined relative to other staff (from 2.4% of all staff in 1990 to 1.9% in 2002). While there has been a strong growth in the number of UNHCR staff over this

period⁹, the numbers of CS staff have fluctuated greatly without identifying a clear trend. In 1992, for instance, overall staff increased by more than 1000 or 44% in one year, while the numbers of CS posts declined from 39 to 37 posts. The period since

Year	UNHCR Staff	Community Services staff posts	Protection staff posts
1990	2,340	57	139
1991	2,175	38	138
1992	2,377	39	167
1993	3,422	37	202
1994	3,595	48	263
1995	4,492	78	390
1996	4,638	99	328
1997	4,846	92	339
1998	4,702	95	376
1999	4,048	73	365
2000	5,030	83	414
2001	5,177	82	457
2002	5,381	100	459

Source: UNHCR staff data

1996 has seen an overall increase in staff at UNHCR from 4,638 in 1996 to 5,381 in 2002 or 16% over this 7-year period. CS staff numbers have gone up and down during these past seven years, but never increased significantly from the 1996 level. Protection staff¹⁰ have increased 40% over the period of the past 7 years. While in 1990 there was one Community Services staff for every 2.4 Protection staff, in 2002 CS staff levels were in a ratio of 1 to 4.6 Protection staff. (See Figure 4).

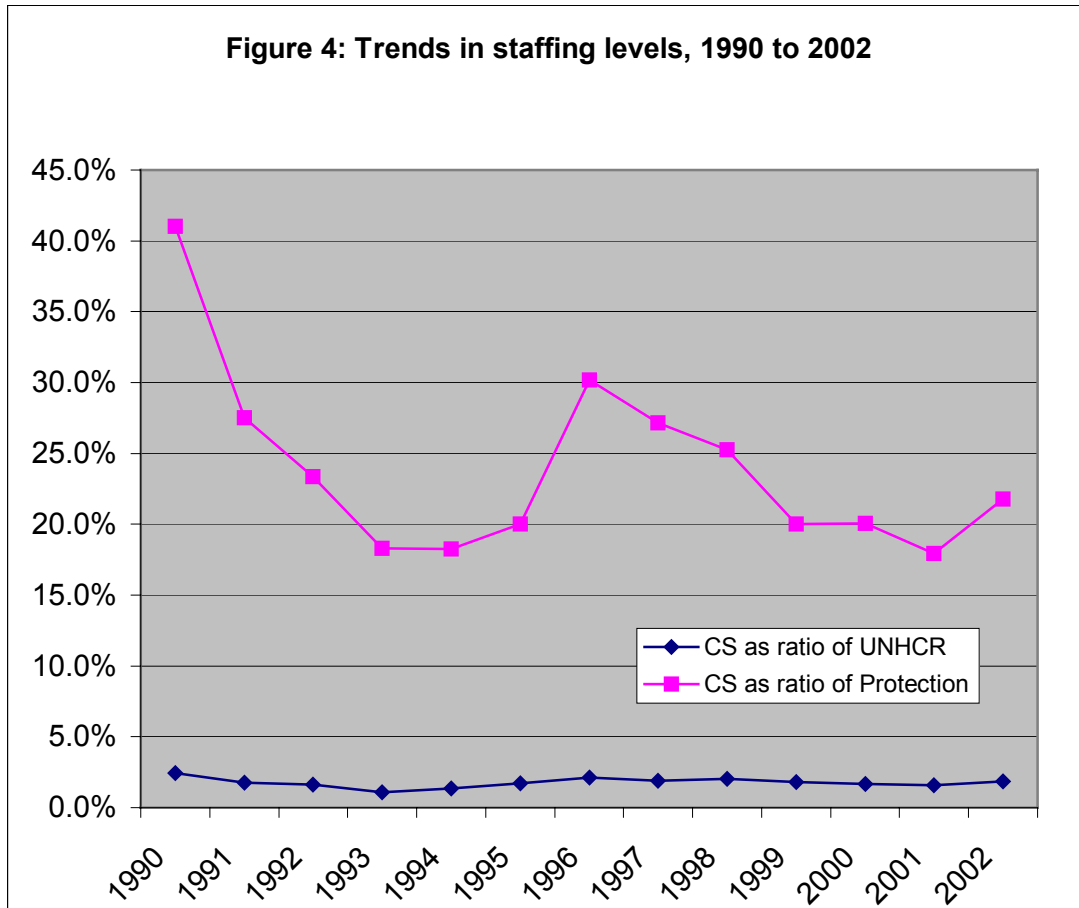
Decline in professional and international CS Staff

34. Over the past decade or so, it has become increasingly rare to find CS staff being hired as professional (P levels) staff, or as international staff. For instance, between 1990 and 1994, international staff made up between 35 and 37% of all CS staff. After this, the proportion declined steadily to 29% in 1995 and 21% in 2002. Similarly the proportion of CS staff classified as “professional staff” has declined each year from a high of 66% in 1991 to 31% in 2002. There were four P4s in 2002, that being the highest level of Community Services post. In 1996, 26% of Community Services posts (26 out of 99) were classified as P2 or higher, while in 2002 only 15

⁹ Over the past 12 years the growth in Community Services staff has not kept pace with the growth in overall staffing levels at UNHCR. The total UNHCR staff, including regular and short-term staff, has risen from 2,340 in 1990 to 5,381 in 2002, or 130%.

¹⁰ For comparison purposes, data were obtained on Sector O, Protection, and on the staffing trends of the Department of Protection. This sector was chosen in part because it is another function at the field level, and is intended only to help to provide a context within which trends related to Community Services at UNHCR can be understood.

(15%) were at this level.¹¹ The proportion of Protection staff classified as professional¹² has gradually been decreasing from 86% in 1990 to 64% in 2002 (compared with 31% of CS staff).¹³ In 1990, 81% of Protection staff were international staff compared with 52% in 2002 (and 21% of CS staff). Over the past three years, there have been between eight and 12 P5 level Protection posts, compared with none for Community Services.



35. The number of Protection staff based in Headquarters has been rising since the early 1990s from 21 in 1990 to a high of 41 in 2001, and 34 in 2002. The number of CS staff based in Headquarters went from six in 1990 to a high of nine in 1998 to two in 2002.

36. Some UNHCR staff have articulated the perception that CS staff are ‘weak’, under-qualified, or do not have the appropriate educational backgrounds for their positions. It has also been expressed that UNHCR managers frequently misuse CS posts, for instance as a means of promoting secretaries, drivers or other staff who do

¹¹ The proportion of UNHCR staff at P levels or higher in 2002 is at around the same level as it was in 1990 at 22% and 20% respectively.

¹² There are various definitions of professional staff in use. We are here referring to staff classified as “P” or “D” levels.

¹³ Senior staff at P2-P5 levels accounted for 196 out of 459 posts in 2002 or 43% of protection posts. In 2001, 211 out of 457 posts were at this level or 46%. (In 1990, when there were many fewer protection staff, the proportion at the P2-P5 levels was 57%.)

not have appropriate skills or training. While this may be true in some cases, information gathered as part of this evaluation suggests a rather high academic/professional background, given the lower levels at which most CS are concentrated:

- 46% of CS staff surveyed have Masters degree or higher;
- Almost all have B.A. or college level studies;
- Some are highly specialized in fields related to refugee and humanitarian assistance, community development, rural development, etc..

Table 4: Years of Service by Gender for 57 CASA Survey respondents		
Years of services with UNHCR	Female staff	Male staff
More than 20 years	2	
15-20 years	1	
11-14 years	4	1
5-10 years	16	4
2-4 years	11	1
Under 2 years	12	4
No information		1
TOTAL	46	11

Source: CASA Electronic survey of CS Staff, June 2002

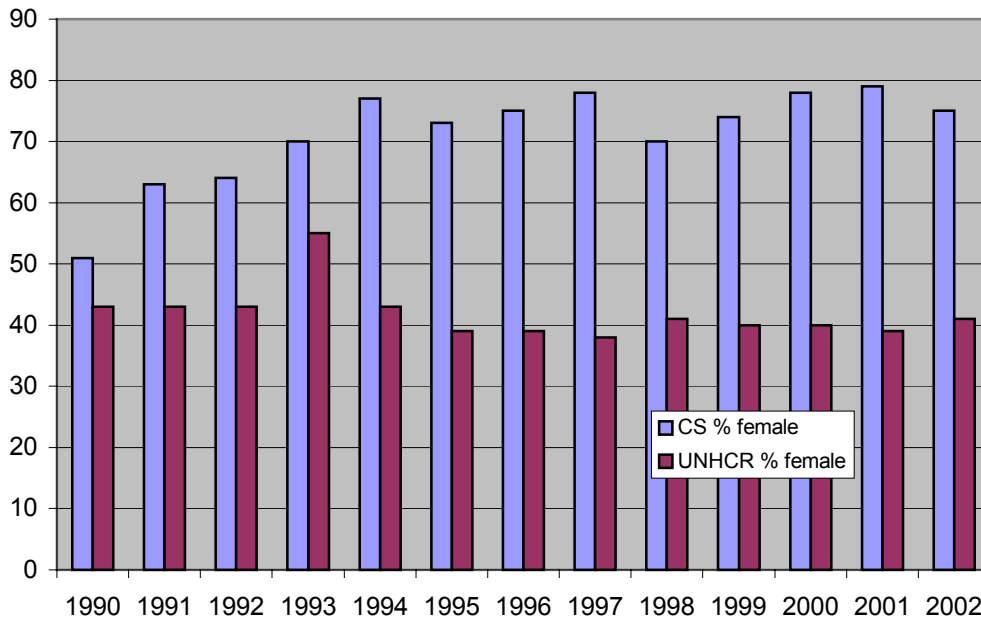
37. Almost all survey respondents indicate having training in areas that could be seen as relevant to CS work: mainly social sciences, sociology, economics, public administration, psychology, social work, anthropology, development, management. A few CS staff have backgrounds in fields which appear less relevant to CS work, coming from administration, literature, English, translation, modern languages, biology, agronomy, teaching and nursing.¹⁴ Approximately half the CS staff is also relatively new to UNHCR, with four years or less work experience.

Rising levels of female staff: feminisation of the CS function

38. The proportion of female Community Services staff has been rising, from about half (51%) in 1990 to a high of 79% in 2001 and 75% in 2002. Community Services and its predecessor, Social Services, have historically been more female identified than many other sectors. In 1990, for instance, CS staff were 51% female, compared to UNHCR as a whole having 46% female staff. However, the proportion of female staff employed by UNHCR has decreased over this period to 41% of all staff (compared to a rise to 75% of community services staff). (See Figure 5) During the 12-year period on which these data were available, DIP has moved from being 69% male in 1990 to having a majority of female staff (54% female in 2002).

¹⁴ It is well beyond the scope of this evaluation to in any way assess individual competencies of CS staff or other staff. Staff with 'relevant' educational backgrounds may not be performing their roles well, just as staff with less formal training in CS-related fields may have received necessary in-service training and experience and prove excellent in their work.

Figure 5: Percentage of Female Staff, CS and UNHCR 1990 to 2002



Source: Internal UNHCR Personnel Records

39. Unlike other functions of UNHCR where there have been systematic efforts in recent years to address gender imbalances in traditionally male-dominated posts, there appears to have been no corresponding effort to attract male recruits to this female-dominated professional group. Given some of the more sensitive issues and areas covered by CS in the field – increasingly associated with the promotion of gender equality, and the risks and realities of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation among refugees, there are good reasons for having a strong and competent cadre of female CS staff accessible to women refugees in the field, as well as at all levels of the Office. However, the same issues equally require that male commitment, perspectives and participation be demonstrated and modelled by UNHCR through recruitment of a greater number of male CS staff.

40. In fact, the ‘feminisation’ of the CS function is neither rational nor strategic, but the result of a self-perpetuating cycle played out in a highly gendered institution. In 1987, when the Social Services function was transferred from Programme Management Services (PMS) to Technical Support Services (TSS) - approximately 22 of 43 field positions were classified as social service-related activities.¹⁵ At this time, a majority of male staff members were advanced into newly created technical posts, at higher grades (up to the P5 level), while their female counterparts largely remained in the generalist Social Services function at lower grades, none above the P4 level. As men were promoted out of Social Services and into newly evolving technical roles, a ‘glass ceiling’ was created for women who remained in Social – now Community Services.

¹⁵ Memo, from UNHCR archives, October 18, 1988

41. By 2002, our interviews with UNHCR staff in headquarters and in the field are replete with stories of experienced CS staff who have struggled to get out of CS because it is a 'dead end' for career advancement within the Office. As it was primarily women who remained within the Social/Community Services, out of commitment or the lack of alternative postings, the function has taken on the characteristics of any female-dominated occupation – low status, low authority, low investment and few opportunities for advancement. Added to this is the assumption that women are simply better at dealing with gender and children's issues, the sick, and the elderly. CS has become associated with traditional 'women's work', and has become an unattractive area for competent and ambitious male recruits. This, in addition to the low investment made by the Office in articulating a rational and strategic role for CS in relation to UNHCR's core mandate and key functions, has contributed to the view by some that CS staff is a 'luxury' rather than a core resource and function of the Office as a whole.

- **Our review of budgeting and staffing of CS demonstrates that the CS function has declined in priority relative to overall UNHCR staffing and budgeting priorities. This may have happened inadvertently, as some have suggested, or as a matter of policy. In the light of this evaluation, we strongly recommend that senior management review the need for the CS function, the current resources allocated to this function, and the priority of CS to the Office of the High Commissioner.**

Implementation of CS: staff, implementing partners and consultants

42. CS staff are only one element that make up the 'CS function.' As we have seen, CS staff are few in number and are present in a minority of field operations. Increasingly, Field staff, junior Programme staff, IPs and host governments are integral players in the performance of the CS function. This chapter focuses on issues around direct staffing, use of Implementing and Operational Partners, and the use of temporary staff or secondees.

Range of staff and partners implementing the CS function

43. While field officers and IPs were not extensively surveyed as part of this evaluation, secondary data, interviews and field observations confirm that where no CS staff are present in the field, Field staff carries out many activities that CS staff would normally perform. Where CS staff is not present, many of the 'focal point' and reporting functions on social and community issues fall more heavily on Field staff.

44. IPs may be contracted (fully or with some of their own funding) to deliver only what is found under Sector H (Community Services) of the programme budget, but most often are contracted to deliver services and activities under a number of different budget categories.¹⁶ In some cases, CS staff may directly supervise CS IPs – but most are supervised by field staff, Programme or Protection staff. As the main delivery point for UNHCR's services and assistance to refugee populations and those in closest contact with refugees, IPs are the key link to ensuring that UNHCR's policy and programme objectives are met in the field.

45. A number of NGOs have stand-by agreements with UNHCR to provide temporary staff at short notice. The foremost example of this is the Community Services Emergency Stand-by Agreement between UNHCR and Save the Children Sweden and Norway. Operative since 1993, the Stand-by Agreement provides experienced social workers and Community Services Officers to serve in emergencies situations within 72 hours of a formal request by UNHCR. Between 1993 and 2000, Save the Children Sweden/Norway provided more than 50 three-month deployments of CS Officers to emergency and emergency-like situations¹⁷, representing a significant contribution to UNHCR's emergency response capacity.¹⁸

46. Operational partners (OPs) increasingly play a key role in providing assistance and services in addition to what UNHCR can provide, using their own funds.

¹⁶ Education, Health, Counselling, Income Generating Activities, SGBV activities, HIV/AIDS Awareness, Environmental Activities, Assistance Delivery to EVIs, among others

¹⁷ Save the Children Norway. "Summary of Recommendations and Comments based on Reviews and Evaluation Reports from October 1999 to October 2000". p.3.

¹⁸ This illustrates the strong commitment of UNHCR's NGO partners to the strengthening of the CS function, which they see as badly under-resourced within UNHCR.

Operational partners in several countries visited provide parallel income-generating activities, assistance to vulnerable groups, education, and services to urban refugees beyond what UNHCR can offer, but are often not recognised and taken into account in UNHCR's determination of needs, programme design and delivery.

47. Refugee populations, groups and associations also act as key partners of UNHCR and its Community Services function. They are, however, generally treated by UNHCR as the objects of assistance, mobilisation, planning and implementation, rather than as subjects in their own protection and solutions. Issues around refugees as partners and participants are treated elsewhere in this report.

In-house staffing of the CS function

48. The CS Staff Questionnaire developed by the evaluation team and administered electronically to staff in various country operations in May-June 2002 tried to identify the different areas and types of activities that CS staff have responsibility for in their offices. The sectors and activities for which CS staff have specific responsibilities are extensive, and most CS staff surveyed have primary or shared responsibilities for a wide range of areas. These include:

- Gender¹⁹
- Refugee children²⁰
- Care of the elderly (particularly the most vulnerable)
- Care of the disabled (particularly, the most vulnerable)
- Identification and assistance to Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs)²¹
- Sexual and gender-based violence²²
- Education²³
- Health²⁴
- Reproductive health

¹⁹ Ensuring that gender issues crosscut work in other sectors, gender equality and participation, women's empowerment, 'vulnerable' women, creation/ liaison with women's groups, etc.

²⁰ Cross-cutting issues of child protection, including unaccompanied minors/ separated children, pre-school, EVIs, child protection issues at the community level, ARC training and sensitisation; cross-cutting issues around promotion of girls' education, infant and child feeding programmes, psycho-social counselling, etc.)

²¹ Ensuring access of EVIs to assistance and services);

²² Trainings, community mobilization, promoting community involvement in these issues, ensuring safe houses, reporting and maintaining records, coordinating IP/UNHCR prevention and response

²³ Including primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational training/skills development - monitoring, management of programmes, allocation of scholarships, assistance and special support.

²⁴ Medical programmes, medical referrals, frequent involvement with the needs of medical cases referred to urban area, liaison/capacity building with IPs, etc.

- Income generating activities²⁵
- HIV/AIDS awareness
- Psycho-social activities,
- Environment ²⁶
- Land mines awareness,
- Peace education
- Allocation of cash assistance to refugees
- Community mobilization, organisation and development²⁷
- Assessment/referral of ‘vulnerable’ cases for resettlement and counselling of refugees.

49. CS staff become responsible for many issues and areas that involve the direct delivery of services to refugees. They are also widely utilised as a key delivery point of sensitisation campaigns, training initiatives, and implementation of policy priorities identified by Headquarters.

CS Staff as ‘focal points’

50. In addition to these broad areas of responsibility, CS staff are often designated ‘focal points’ for many, if not most of these areas. Approximately 80% of CS staff surveyed say that they are focal points in their offices for gender and children, both policy priorities of the Office. In addition, most are also responsible for health, reproductive health, education, SGBV, income-generating and self-reliance activities and numerous other areas. More than half of CS staff surveyed are focal points in their offices for four or more of the above-mentioned areas of activity, of which each may have separate sets of implementing partners and specific relations with local officials, as well as members of the refugee population. More than a quarter of CS staff respondents say that they are focal points within their offices for six or more areas of activity. Table 5 shows the percentage of CS staff that are designated focal point by number of areas.

51. What the designation of ‘focal point’ means in terms of work depends largely on the local context, the extent to which staff works collaboratively and shares information with others in their office, the extent to which appropriate IPs have been identified.

²⁵ Design, supervision, monitoring of micro-credit, grants and in-kind equipment or animals for income generating activities).

²⁶ Projects and activities to safeguard the environment, and to monitor environmental impacts.

²⁷ Cross-cutting issues involving refugee participation in other sectors such as camp security, water and sanitation, fire prevention and fire fighting, income generating activities, education, etc.

52. In principle, the role of the focal point is to act as an information conduit or liaison for activities both within and outside the office around a specific set of issues, as well as with partners and, in some cases, refugee groups and organisations. In practice, this is seen by most CS staff surveyed to be an extremely time-consuming process, involving numerous meetings, reporting and other bureaucratic procedures. It is frequently

viewed as a distraction from more pressing responsibilities in the field. Even when an office does not have significant projects in a specific area, CS staff is expected to continually furnish information to branch, regional and head offices.

53. Sometimes the staff most directly responsible for carrying out activities related to specific issue areas are *not* designated its focal point, and does not benefit from the information required to fulfil their function. In the words of one respondent,

“Usually, it (focal point) implies monopolization of the work by certain people. It also includes concealing of information, not sharing with other colleagues. The Focal Points seem to have unknown authorities with no responsibility or accountability.”

54. The tendency to appoint as ‘focal points’ persons with relatively low status and levels of authority or influence within their offices partly explains the limits to the implementation of Women’s and Children’s Guidelines described in recent independent evaluations of these areas. Where key social and physical protection concerns of women and children, among others, are identified by CS staff with low levels of authority and influence in the local office, this information tends to be poorly reflected in changes to the programming and protection activities carried out in the field.²⁸

55. The implementation of the guidelines on Refugee Women and Children represent only two key policy priorities for which CS staff become ‘focal points’. The proliferation of guidelines and initiatives from Headquarters establish strong competition for the limited time and resources of CS and other staff, and are frequently seen to detract from their ability to deal effectively with the realities they encounter on the ground.

- **There is clearly a need for enhanced team formation and collaborative work between UNHCR’s core functions (Protection, CS, Programme and**

No areas	6	10.5%
1 area	6	10.5
2 areas	9	16
3 areas	6	10.5
4 areas	11	19
5 areas	4	7
6 areas	2	3.5
7 or more areas	13	23
Total Respondents	57	100
Source: E-mail Survey of CS Staff, June, 2002		

²⁸ The 2002 Children’s evaluation highlights “prevalence” and “ineffectiveness” of delegating to a single, national CS officer the role of Children’s focal point. It recommends “UNHCR should reconsider the use of focal points and rather expand the model of Turkey with inter-sectoral committees that meet regularly to review refugee children’s concerns. Valid International., “Meeting the rights and protection needs of refugee children: An independent evaluation of the impact of UNHCR’s activities”. p. 47-48.

Field) for the attainment of the Office's objectives, as opposed to the single staff 'focal point'.

- Such teamwork, however, should be built around field-based issues and analysis, rather than Headquarters-based priorities and initiative.
- Current inequalities of status and authority between CS and other functions should be addressed, as they are seen to limit the overall effectiveness of such team approaches.
- CS staff and others at field-level currently spend far too much time 'supporting' the roles of their superiors, rather than being able to access the support and assistance they require. If policy objectives are to be attained in the field, senior management at BO level, such as the Deputy Representative, should be identified as 'focal point', and held responsible for developing and coordinating the work of cross-sectoral and multi-functional 'teams' on priority issues.
- In addition, a more effective 'focal ' role should be played by technical specialists and located in Headquarters and Regional Offices. Staff need to know to whom they can turn when they face specific problems that fall beyond what is covered in written guidelines, and technical specialists need to be highly accessible as resources to Country and field-level staff for training, guidance and support in dealing with the daily realities and challenges of their work environments.

Level of responsibility of CS staff

56. Of all CS staff who responded to our Community Services staff survey, 58% were engaged as general (non-professional) staff at the G6 level or lower. This majority of CS staff, comprised mainly of CS Assistants and Clerks, report that they are generally poorly integrated into programming, and policy and decision-making within their offices. Most are involved in the coordination, supervision and monitoring of IPs in a wide range of sectors, but have limited involvement in programme design, assessment and contracting of IPs, and have limited or no budgets that they control directly. Programme or Protection staff usually supervise CS staff, but may have an inadequate understanding of the CS function and little guidance to offer to help address the daily demands of CS implementation.

57. Based on field missions, interviews and observations, it is evident that staff at this level must frequently follow up on the work of Programme and Protection staff. The majority of CS staff, typically female national staff at low levels, find it difficult to deflect the pressures to take on tasks un-related to their job-description, passed on to them by their superiors. This leads to a highly inconsistent and incoherent expression of the CS function in the field.

58. Professional CS staff²⁹ generally report that they have a higher degree of integration into decision-making structures and processes within their offices, and are more frequently consulted by colleagues and superiors than non-professional staff.

²⁹ Engaged as National Officers, UNVs, JPOs or in the P2 to P4 categories.

59. Overall, for most professional and non-professional staff, we find that the CS function is characterised by a marked imbalance between the level of responsibility of staff (which is very high) and their level of authority (which is very low).

Priorities and time-use of CS staff

60. Community Services Staff survey respondents were asked to identify the tasks and activities that they felt were most important to their function given the local context, as well as those that they consider contribute little to the overall effectiveness of the function. The activities and tasks that CS staff considered as most important varied according to the respondent's level, but generally reflected a high value placed on time spent working directly with refugee groups and with IPs providing services. Activities and tasks that CS staff consider most important are:

- Community mobilisation and participation around a broad number of issue areas, including women and children's rights;
- Support to refugees in proposal writing, self-reliance initiatives, micro-projects, skills training;
- Direct monitoring of issues of access of refugees to available resources, with particular focus on refugee women, children and 'vulnerable' groups and individuals;
- Needs assessment, including the use of participatory approaches to identifying needs of vulnerable groups and individuals;
- Many CS staff, in camps and urban areas alike, devote a lot of time to dealing with assistance related issues – food, clothing, housing, other basic needs and how best to distribute these;
- Capacity-building, training and coordination of implementing partners;
- Building trust, dialogue and partnership between UNHCR, IPs and refugee communities.

61. The areas in which CS staff find their time used ineffectively are many. However, the most common areas mentioned by staff are:

- Meetings, workshops and public relations events that have no direct relationship to the CS function and/or consistently do not produce tangible results;
- The vast and expanding responsibilities for reporting and providing information to higher levels within the organisation is seen to detract from the time that staff can spend in the field with refugees and IPs;
- The increasing burden of greater and greater responsibilities on fewer staff. Staff responsible for large sectors like CS and Education find that they do not have time to do what they consider to be an adequate job. In particular, the general hostility of CS staff to 'meetings' in part reflects their comments that the typical result of meetings is that more tasks are passed on to them;

- Particularly in urban areas, CS staff tend to be drawn into direct casework, counselling, assistance and referrals with refugees, which while meaningful at a human level, are found to take a disproportionate amount of time away from other pressing responsibilities.

62. It is a challenge to many staff, particularly those working most closely with IPs and refugees, to maintain a clear sense of priority in their work, where the needs of refugees are many, resources extremely limited, and they need to balance many different kinds of demands from Headquarters.

63. Overall, the institution appears to send contradictory messages about the importance of being 'close to' and knowledgeable about the refugee population and local context. It clearly puts heavy demands on staff time to be providing reports, statistics, participating in conferences, training and meetings – that distract CS staff from the direct responsibilities they have been given at the level of the field. Based on our observations, visits to the field by most BO-based staff are infrequent, although CS staff seem to get to the field more than other staff members. It was frequently commented to us that UNHCR tends to reward and recognise those who write well and report on time, rather than those who establish effective working relationships with NGOs and refugee groups.

64. Crucial issues for country operations in regard to the management of CS staff appear to be: how to reward staff who spend time learning about issues and problems at camp level; how to promote teamwork such that refugee realities are known, discussed, and taken into account by staff; and how to reward analysis and critical thinking about local realities that assist in problem solving.

CS and implementing / operational partners

65. In the field, CS staff often play a supervisory and/or monitoring and coordination role of IPs providing direct services to refugees. IPs themselves are numerous and vary considerably in terms of the types and level of independent resources provided. They vary with respect to their level of experience in the contracted areas. Within a single country operation, CS staff may be dealing with established international NGOs (INGOs), and local NGOs (LNGOs).³⁰

66. Staff roles and function in relation to IPs depend a great deal on the existing experience and capacity that IPs bring to the field. Some INGOs have accumulated much experience in the implementation of CS and related activities in the field. These include Save the Children, ICMC, JRS, CARE, Red Cross, Oxfam, CORD, LWF, IRC, ARC, Norwegian Refugee Council, among others. These organisations have a wealth of policy and practical CS-related experience with refugee situations to share with UNHCR. They could be used much more effectively by UNHCR for the inputs and resources that they can provide, particularly in updating CS materials and guidelines.

67. The quality of services provided by any one INGO varies greatly from one refugee operation to another, depending on the quality of local staff and

³⁰ Also with government service providers willing to include refugees in their services to nationals. Refugee organizations also provide services.

management. In Zambia, we found that LWF, which has a good reputation worldwide, was seriously remiss in its management of UNHCR funds on behalf of refugees in Meheba settlement.

68. While INGOs with experience in the delivery of CS and related activities constitute an invaluable resource, UNHCR has in many areas been phasing out INGOs in favour of the contacting of more local NGOs. This may enhance local resident capacity to deal with refugee issues, and is also undertaken as a cost saving measure.³¹ Many CS staff report spending a great deal of time on training and capacity building with local NGOs with little prior experience in working with UNHCR, or, in some instances, with refugees. With both local and established NGOs, ensuring an understanding and implementation of UNHCR's policies on refugee women and children, is particularly time consuming.

Selection and contracting of implementing partners

69. CS staff often do not participate in the selection of IPs, even when IPs are being specifically contracted to provide services under Budget Sector H. In the words of one CS staff,

“From my experience, we do not always have appropriate IPs...the problems faced by many offices with CS IPs is that choosing the IP is the job of the Programme officer and the CS officer is never consulted. IPs are chosen on the basis of friendship or contacts, rather than the content of their work-- which the PO might not be able to evaluate.”

70. Only in a few cases that we are aware of have CS staff been involved in the selection and formulation of sub-agreements with IPs. A positive case was found in Pakistan where a seconded CS officer was able to assert her role and responsibility in the selection of a new CS IP.

71. A point frequently raised in the context of field missions and staff surveys, is the challenge to IPs generally, but particularly in urban areas, to provide a meaningful level of services given limited financial resources allocated by UNHCR. IPs find themselves caught between the growing demands on refugee services and the frequent cuts and restrictions to budgets, contributing to IP staff demoralization, high turn-over, and poor performance. In the words of a CS staff in a large urban programme:

“Dealing with an urban refugee caseload is so specialized and different from other developmental work that NGO's do, ...that staff lack the skill in handling this caseload. Besides, the financial constraints of UNHCR and the tight budget does not give them adequate scope to do much...Staff at the NGO level are not motivated enough in dealing with the challenges in this type of work since there are no incentives for them (like yearly wage increases) as

³¹ In Zambia, we found that LINGOs were not permitted to charge UNHCR the same overheads as INGOs are paid for carrying out the same activities, which was seen by some to be a discriminatory practice.

offered in other jobs. The salaries they get are not attractive enough, so you get... those who are not committed enough and leave the job on the slightest pretext.”

72. In nearly all contexts, IPs stressed that poor performance in many aspects of CS work is directly linked to extremely low budgets associated with key CS activities – for income-generating activities, vocational training and employment opportunities, for assistance to EVIs, and few resources to support community development and self-help initiatives. Furthermore, delays in disbursements from UNHCR to IPs have, in several cases reviewed, brought CS and related activities to a virtual standstill – resulting in loss of credibility of IPs in the eyes of refugee beneficiaries. Given the size of budgets, IPs state they find it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain adequately trained and motivated staff.

- **Overall, we note a trend within UNHCR to engage in cost cutting measures that put the greatest pressure on IPs providing direct delivery of services to refugees, rather than looking to cost-cutting from within its own operating structure. UNHCR should review and adjust this trend, as well as address and rectify delays in disbursements that threaten the quality and timely delivery of services. IPs, in turn, should take a firm stand in relation to UNHCR, and resist the temptation to sign agreements that they know, or suspect, are unrealistic. IPs should not put at risk their own professional reputations by agreeing to deliver what is beyond the means provided them by UNHCR.**

73. It is also suggested by staff surveys and field missions that long-standing IPs in CS and other sectors, who come to take their annual sub-agreements with UNHCR for granted, may fall into patterns of routine service and assistance delivery that are not adaptive to changing needs and emerging problems within the refugee population. Worse, as we have seen in numerous recent cases, local IP staff and management may form ties to exploitative networks that profit from widespread refugee poverty and vulnerability. In protracted refugee situations, as UNHCR staff are rarely in a position to provide an independent assessment of emerging risk factors, apart from that provided by IPs themselves, they often lack the basis for much needed programme adjustments and new approaches.

- **It is recommended that CS staff be included in the selection of IPs in all relevant sectors that will come under their supervision. Selection of IPs should be based, to the largest extent possible, on relevant criteria based on social needs assessment and situation analysis coordinated by CS staff.**
- **While it is recognised there are costs and disruption involved in changing IPs, the performance of IPs should be periodically and systematically reviewed to ensure that they are investing in learning and adapting their activities in response to changing refugee realities and emerging social problems.**

- **As noted above, this poses an even greater challenge to UNHCR to provide on-going monitoring and supervision of IPs based on a solid analysis of the refugee context.**³²
- **Independent evaluations of IP programmes should be strongly encouraged by UNHCR, and country operations should invest in joint UNHCR-IP-Beneficiary evaluations processes towards enhancing programme effectiveness, coordination, and learning from experience.**

Cost-effectiveness and financial management of IPs

74. While there is often a good common understanding of priorities between CS and IPs, IP staff frequently comment that this is of little practical significance, since on the issue of budgeting, for example, IPs most frequently deal directly with Programme Officers. Both CS and IP staff have expressed immense frustration with the fact that discussions and plans concerning the approach, content and objectives of activities do not generally determine the financial decisions taken by the Programme section.

75. Some IPs, particularly in urban areas, find themselves running between protection, Programme and CS staff to ensure payment for the costs incurred. In the words of one IP spokesperson:

“Most of the time, we are in a situation where we need to act. When it takes ages for UNHCR to respond, when they don’t meet the costs in a timely way, the costs actually go up. Recently we had 40 refugees waiting for transportation [to be provided by UNHCR to one of the settlements]. [UNHCR] kept waiting and waiting, and eventually, we have to feed the refugees. They get angry and frustrated because they are not respected, and you [the IP] get your windows broken. The costs of waiting around, which UNHCR makes you do, are always higher, so there is ultimately no savings.”

76. As UNHCR loses control over activities in the field, and increasingly lacks the basis for drawing independent conclusions about refugee contexts, in a context of budget restraint, UNHCR staff are likely to emphasise financial control in excessively formalistic ways. It may often be more cost-effective in the long run that IPs be given more discretion to address refugee problems and issues as they arise.

Supervising and monitoring of IPs by UNHCR staff

77. In general, few UNHCR staff are currently in a position to provide an independent assessment of how well vulnerability issues are being assessed and addressed by IPs overall. At the same time, IPs feel unable to strategically address issues of vulnerability within the refugee population and effectively implement a

³² There is a serious contradiction between using IPs as your main source of baseline information and situation analysis, while at the same time being responsible to monitor the IPs’ performance and compliance with policies and with sub-agreements. Yet as the UNHCR staff presence on the ground becomes thinner, this is increasingly the situation UNHCR is facing.

preventive and solutions-oriented approach in the field, because their resources are so limited and tightly controlled by UNHCR.

78. Overall, we find that the monitoring capacity of the CS function to be weak. In the CS staff survey, staff were asked if they had adequate population information, age/gender analysis and other resources needed to identify and assist 'vulnerable' groups and individuals. A third of respondents indicated that they did not. Of the rest, most were wholly dependent on statistics provided by IPs on numbers of refugees assisted, rather than a more substantive analysis of the 'level' and 'types' of vulnerability in the overall population³³. A number of respondents raised concerns about the reliability and accuracy of information received from IPs, but did not have the resources to correct the situation.

79. In the course of field missions and discussions with IPs, it was consistently reported that while IPs are in a good position to help identify 'vulnerable' groups and individuals, this information is largely irrelevant, since budgets and types of assistance are set by UNHCR staff. Standard reporting formats feature those receiving assistance, but do not draw attention to unmet needs within the refugee population. The basis for UNHCR's budgeting being resource-based rather than needs-based, sets up a self-perpetuating cycle where budgets determine information gathered about 'vulnerables' and that information is reported back to UNHCR staff.

80. Standard reporting formats generally do not require any information from IPs about unmet needs. They do not ask about the underlying causes of widespread protection problems. This report has highlighted in other parts how the unavailability of appropriate roofing materials or inappropriate staple foods³⁴ can widely enhance refugee vulnerability. These vulnerabilities lead to increased protection problems in the form of malnutrition, disease, sexual exploitation, and other issues of concern to the Office.

- **UNHCR should reconsider its current resource-based budgeting, in favour of needs-based budgeting, as requested by some donor governments. Such a move would require UNHCR's Protection and CS functions to collaborate on monitoring and documenting the impacts of current programming and identify areas where more resources are required. The current system leads to the impression that UNHCR is able to continue to meet its programme objectives, despite on-going budget cuts. This is not the case. Donors require more detailed information and documentation of the negative impacts of diminishing resources on refugee protection, and the unmet needs that can generate greater protection in the medium to long term. The CS function and IPs have a key role to play in providing UNHCR management with the information and analysis requested by donor governments.**

³³ A clear exception to this case was noted in our field mission to the Urban Refugee Programme in Moscow, where due to the inexperience and lack of autonomy of UNHCR's main implementing partner, the CS Officer reviewed and monitored almost every case jointly with the IP. Reports from other field operations indicate that other CS Officers also spend a great deal of time reviewing and monitoring individual cases to determine assistance needs.

³⁴ Which typically lead to the sale of food at discounted rates in order to purchase more appropriate foods at higher prices.

81. In practice, we find that the terms ‘supervision’ and ‘monitoring’ of IPs should be understood as ‘monitoring for compliance’ rather than ‘monitoring for attainment of objectives’. Ideally CS and UNHCR should be able to identify which efforts by IPs effectively avert risks and prevent increased vulnerability. In the absence of an independent assessment of the refugee context, of risk factors and differential vulnerabilities, CS staff are typically only able to monitor what IPs report is in agreement with the items, assistance and activities as specified under sub-agreements. Whether or not these goods are having the maximum or desired impact, or whether they have reached refugees at all, is largely beyond the reach of UNHCR.

82. As we have seen in the case of Meheba settlement in Zambia, this system has led to an unacceptable level of neglect. NGOs and refugees alike complained bitterly about widespread corruption and expropriation of UNHCR resources. The reports of one IP as to what it was delivering were not regularly verified as to whether the goods on record were in fact received. CORD, also implementing CS in Zambia, has sought to address the latter problem by requiring refugees to sign for any form of assistance and items provided them. However, CORD’s self-evaluation report recognises that this accountability measure runs counter to the spirit of the community development approach and self-help initiatives it is mandated to implement³⁵.

Emergency stand-by arrangements and CS emergency response

83. The evaluation undertook an examination of the Emergency Stand-by Agreement between UNHCR and Save the Children Sweden/Norway, the main mechanism currently used by UNHCR to ensure a CS capacity in emergencies. Initiated in 1993, the Stand-by Agreement provides experienced social workers and CS Officers to serve in emergencies situations within 72 hours of a formal request by UNHCR. Between 1993 and 2000, Save the Children Sweden/Norway provided more than 50 three-month deployments of CS Officers to emergency and emergency-like situations³⁶. By 2002, there have been many more deployments under this agreement, not only to actual emergencies, but also to provide additional CS capacity to non-emergency settings.

84. The Emergency Stand-by Agreement is well supported by the Swedish and Norwegian governments, which fund up to 80% of the cost of implementation of the CS Emergency Stand-by Agreement (ESA). The additional 20% of funding comes from SC Sweden/Norway’s own funds. Given the scope of UNHCR’s own investment in its CS capacity, the ESA represents a significant NGO/donor

³⁵ The CORD evaluation in Zambia states that: “This reporting method seems to militate against a community development approach. The process of collecting the data suggests that CORD is taking on responsibility for the support of those recorded on the forms, and the requirement that each recipient signs for any assistance given confirms it. One of the complaints of village leaders in Mayukwayukwa was that CORD asks for this information from them but then does not provide sufficient help. This seems a fair point... This system does not facilitate the delivery of assistance from one refugee or group of refugees to another. For example, it is not clear how it will capture the assistance given to those whose fields are ploughed by the refugees who have been given oxen on credit in Mayukwayukwa. CORD aspires to support groups of refugees helping each other and others in the community, but this will never happen if its progress is measured by what assistance CORD has given to individuals. It will be hard for refugees to assert ‘ownership’ of activities if every detail has to be recorded by CORD.” p. 32

³⁶ Save the Children Norway. “Summary of Recommendations and Comments based on Reviews and Evaluation Reports from October 1999 to October 2000”. p.3.

contribution to UNHCR's emergency response capacity. The ESA provides UNHCR experienced professional CS Officers, mainly trained as social workers, at very low cost. From UNHCR's side the costs are those of administering the ESA. Their respective governments, rather than UNHCR, pay the salaries of secondees³⁷.

85. Since 1993, through an annual joint SC/UNHCR evaluation process, numerous improvements have been brought to the ESA. Notably, some candidates on the Stand-by roster have been included in emergency management training provided by UNHCR for its own staff. It is seen as extremely important that SC secondments be systematically introduced to UNHCR's emergency procedures prior to deployment. Many have also received ARC training, one of the best tools at UNHCR's disposal for the preparation of CS staff.

86. Most UNHCR staff see the ESA as a valued asset. A few UNHCR staff have viewed it with concern, stating that some seconded CS Officers have little experience in working with refugees, and less with UNHCR. Some, particularly on their first secondment to UNHCR, are not familiar with UNHCR's institutional culture, protocols and work methods. UNHCR staff have commented that the ESA system poses a problem, since UNHCR does not have adequate control over who is posted to which emergency situations, and that UNHCR is not in a position to evaluate and reject inappropriate candidates, even after a seconded CS Officer may have performed inadequately in the field.

87. SC Sweden/Norway and seconded CS Officers themselves also had some concerns about the implementation of the ESA. For instance, some seconded CS Officers reported not being given appropriate Terms of reference to guide their work. Seconded CS Officers come with a community development approach, which they see as is poorly understood and undervalued by many UNHCR colleagues. Some stated that they often have to fight for the means required to do their jobs. They are frequently allocated no budgets, no space, and no transport. Seconded CS Officers often see themselves as the initiators of bridge building and teamwork with colleagues. Few UNHCR managers approach CS Officers for their input and analysis.

88. A major frustration for seconded CS Officers is the poor follow-up of activities they initiate in the emergency phase. While seeing their role as laying the foundation for sustained community-based and participatory work, many find that after their departure, recommendations and work plans are not followed, and needed staff are not engaged.

89. It has been emphasised by seconded CS Officers that they are in a unique position to 'think outside the box' of UNHCR's standard definitions and approaches. Several described a strong tendency towards 'risk averse' behaviour of UNHCR staff, who are more committed to their careers than to taking chances and initiative on behalf of refugees. In the words of one seconded CS Officer who has served several times with UNHCR: "Often career UNHCR staff are not prepared to take risks, because their jobs are on the line. I am not afraid for my career. I am able to speak straightforwardly to the Heads of Office, which surprisingly, they appreciate!"

³⁷ Implementation of the agreement also requires a high degree of support from the permanent employers, who must find replacement staff for the two to three months during which seconded CS Officers serve with UNHCR. This level of commitment by employers is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, particularly where officers may be asked to participate in two or more secondments.

90. According to both CS secondees and UNHCR staff, effective CS analysis and community mobilisation at the earliest phase of an emergency facilitate, among other things:

- Identification of appropriately staffed and trained IPs;
- Understanding of community resources, skills and leadership structures;
- Improved targeting of assistance based on knowledge of characteristics of the refugee population;
- Better site planning for access to services and refugee security;
- Recruitment and training of appropriate local staff who will carry on approaches they learn from contact with Emergency CS deployments;
- Better channels of communication with and participation of refugee in developing their own solutions to assistance and protection issues.

91. Overall, the ESA is seen as an extremely valuable contribution to both to UNHCR's emergency response capacity and the performance of its CS function. It provides UNHCR with access to skilled and experienced CS staff, beyond what UNHCR itself can mobilise in an emergency situation. Seconded CS Officers generally bring solid experience with gender and child-centred approaches, as well as community development and mobilisation techniques. Seconded staff with a commitment to grassroots mobilisation and participatory processes pose a challenge to UNHCR's top-down and bureaucratic orientation. As short-term deployments, their primary concern is towards problem solving on the ground, rather than towards other institutional concerns, such as protocol and career advancement. If fully utilised by UNHCR, this confrontation of approaches provides an important opportunity for mutual learning and organisational change.³⁸

Non-emergency ESA deployments

92. While the ESA is found to be an effective mechanism for the rapid deployment of CS expertise in an emergency situation, it is not intended as a substitute for regular CS Officers in non-emergency and protracted refugee situations. Increasingly the ESA is being called upon to address regular staffing shortfalls within UNHCR, with numerous requests from country operations to extend the stay of short-term CS Officers or to send seconded CS staff on new assignments for upwards of six months. During the course of interviews, it was emphasised that it is most appropriate for

³⁸ Two recommendations from recent joint evaluations are considered important to implement in terms of the enhanced effectiveness of the ESA. One is the recommendation from SC Sweden/Norway that future emergency operations deploy two CS Officers, one primarily to take on the community mobilisation role and other to carry out training of local staff and partners. This recommendation has been taken up by UNHCR on a case-by-case basis. The second recommendation, although difficult given the current funding modalities of the ESA, is for SC Sweden/Norway to try to increase the diversity of linguistic, cultural and professional backgrounds of those on the ESA roster. Both are seen to be important to enhancing the capacity of the ESA to better meet the needs of the CS function in future emergency operations. While social workers may bring important group and individual case management skills, a broader focus on social sciences, with appropriate research and analytic backgrounds, would also be an asset to the ESA.

seconded CS Officers to arrive and leave with the emergency response team. In practice, while UNHCR emergency response teams are normally deployed for 2 months, seconded CS Officers are frequently requested for longer periods, 3 months or more. In cases where seconded staff remain longer than other emergency response team members, they may be left, as the most senior person in the office, to play a role in managing the transition phase. This is seen as too great a level of responsibility to ask of temporary UNHCR staff.

93. We find a growing tendency within UNHCR to want to draw more heavily on the ESA and its roster of CS candidates, but with no accompanying financial and resource commitment on UNHCR's side. This evaluation suggests that there is a danger for UNHCR not to respect the original intention and purpose for the ESA, which was simply to enhance UNHCR's emergency response capacity in the area of CS, under the assumption that after the emergency phase, UNHCR would mobilise its own resources to ensure appropriate staffing of the CS function. UNHCR's response, however, tends to mirror an overall pattern of minimal investment in and commitment to the social aspects of its protection mandate.

Community services and refugee vulnerability

94. In this chapter we examine issues related to defining “vulnerability” and counting and assisting “vulnerables,” and “extremely vulnerable individuals (EVIs)” as they are referred to in UNHCR nomenclature. We suggest that we should rather be talking about populations at risk, and carrying out monitoring and analyses to determine to what extent any specific population, group or individual is at risk. Such analyses should guide strategic interventions, and should direct programming and the assistance provided by implementing partners and others.

Redefining the concept of vulnerability

95. The traditional practice of Community Services within UNHCR has strongly emphasised the role of CS staff and CS IPs in assisting ‘vulnerable’ refugees or just ‘vulnerables’. This aspect of CS work is based on the valid recognition that within any refugee setting there are segments of the population unable to access existing forms of assistance and services, or who may have special needs that require special measures to ensure their physical protection, including health and well-being. However, our findings and the observations of many UNHCR and IP staff indicate that the manner in which vulnerability and ‘vulnerables’ have come to be defined and treated is far from satisfactory.

96. In all settings visited in the course of this evaluation, we find that systems are in place to identify ‘vulnerables’ and/or Extremely Vulnerable Individuals. In most cases, a standard set of categories are being utilised for the identification of ‘vulnerables’. Separated children, single parents (mainly women), the elderly, and those with chronic illness and the physically disabled are among the most frequent categories. The use of these standard definitions is reinforced by the Budget format employed by UNHCR, which specifies the categories under which IPs can provide support to vulnerable groups and individuals³⁹. It is not surprising to find that from the emergency phase onward, IPs tend to stick closely to the pre-defined categories of refugees that UNHCR has contracted them to serve, despite the fact that they see these as problematic.

97. The inability of UNHCR to identify adequate resources to meet the basic needs of refugees is placing a huge burden on staff to define and redefine vulnerability, and finally simply to try to overlook the fact that many refugees are falling through the cracks. Due to a scarcity of resources (in the form of food, non-food items, cash or in-kind assistance) the institutional response has been to further and further reduce the numbers of those who are provided with any form of additional assistance based on their vulnerability. What was originally a focus on vulnerable groups or groups with special needs so as to ensure programs are accessible and inclusive, and thus to

³⁹ Sector H of the Budget specifies the sub-items under which services and assistance to refugees can be provided by UNHCR and IPs: H.21 Special services (unaccompanied minors); H.22 Special services (children); H.23 Special services (women); H.24 Special services (elderly); H.26 Special services (disabled).

design programmes which meet the needs of all refugees, has frequently been subverted during budget crunches. Instead, the keeping of lists of “vulnerables,” becomes the basis for various types of “hair-splitting” machinations, to identify Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs) or the really, really very vulnerable.

98. Many UNHCR and IP staff have commented on the irony, and to some extent futility, of creating elaborate hierarchies of vulnerability in refugee settings. Both the recent Women’s evaluation (Advance copy, May 2002) and the Children’s evaluation (May, 2002) have raised this point in noting that in many refugee contexts, standard definitions of vulnerability used by UNHCR describe about 70-80% of the refugee cases. Crisp, in a recent paper points out that in refugee contexts, as in all other populations, women, children, adolescents, the elderly and the chronically ill and disabled collectively make up a large majority of the population. However, in protracted refugee situations, the relative ‘vulnerability’ of these groups is increased by the fact that:

- Many able-bodied men will leave a camp to look for work in order to support themselves and their families;
- The strongest members of a refugee population are usually the first to repatriate or ‘spontaneously settle’ in the country of asylum, or find alternative ‘solutions’, leaving the weaker members behind;
- Efforts to minimize risks and maximize opportunities lead to families and communities becoming dispersed in different camps, villages and cities.⁴⁰

99. Thus, UNHCR’s refugee caseload in most settings – both rural and urban – has a high proportion of the most vulnerable, as many with other options have generally found their own solutions.⁴¹

Weaknesses of the “vulnerability” approach to refugee assistance

100. Based on field missions, questionnaire responses and interviews carried out in the field and in Headquarters, we find that UNHCR’s resources, staff and IPs are not being optimally managed in regard to vulnerable groups and individuals. The reasons for this are manifold, and include:

- The tendency to attribute vulnerability to particular categories of the population, rather than failings within the refugee-assistance regime itself;
- The fact that standardised labels of vulnerability invoked by UNHCR often fail to adequately capture the range and dimensions of otherwise “at risk” populations;
- The often considerable divergence between the numbers of vulnerable groups and individuals and the adequacy of resources to provide for them;

⁴⁰ Jeff Crisp, “Protracted refugee situations: some frequently asked questions”. EPAU, 2002, p. 5.

⁴¹ In urban areas, the probability of finding large numbers of vulnerable cases may be even higher, in that those most at risk in nearby camps and settlements may be systematically transferred to urban areas for assistance unavailable in the camps and thus become part of the urban caseload.

- Interventions provided by UNHCR to mitigate against “vulnerability” are often at odds with the perceived needs of refugees;
- UNHCR and host government interventions themselves can generate new forms vulnerability, and these are inadequately monitored;
- Given the competing definitions of “vulnerability” – even the task of counting vulnerable refugees has become problematic.

These issues will be discussed in turn below.

101. Several staff and IPs interviewed see the labelling of large segments of the refugee population as vulnerable to be dis-empowering, placing too much emphasis on the limitations of the individual, rather than the failure of UNHCR, IPs and refugee-based organisations to provide adequate and appropriate forms of support and assistance.

102. Based on the standard list of vulnerability criteria, women also tend to be identified as vulnerable more frequently than men. The uncritical use of standard criteria by UNHCR staff and many IPs frequently leads to the overlooking of non-obvious areas of vulnerability. For instance young males may be much more vulnerable to forced military recruitment than young females; while young females may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation than young men. Vulnerability is actually a relative concept that can only be understood based on the specifics of each refugee situation. The analysis of refugee vulnerability needs to be much more closely integrated into an overall situation analysis of the protection and risk factors facing the entire refugee population.

103. IPs and some CS staff consistently complain that they are asked by UNHCR to identify vulnerable individuals, even in situations where there are no resources to provide additional assistance. Amounts at the discretion of CS staff and IPs for addressing the special requirements of vulnerable individuals tend to be extremely low, and in several settings reviewed amount to some \$1,000 dollars per year to meet a wide range of needs for a whole camp. These amounts do not appear to vary considerably based on the population size of the camp, nor are they generally based on any systematic analysis of needs or specific protection problems or issues.

104. The frustration and sense of powerlessness that staff feel with this process is substantial. In the course of this evaluation, several instances were observed of CS and field staff giving money or goods from their own pockets to assist particularly desperate cases. While this generosity of staff at field-level is highly commendable, it also a sign of the failure of the UNHCR as lead agency to put in place appropriate systems to assist those who are unable to meet their own basic needs⁴².

⁴² In Thailand the evaluation team met with a UNHCR field assistant in Mae Hong Son who was asked to participate in an assessment to identify EVIs in a nearby camp. He found disabled people living in total squalor. His reaction was to go to the market and purchase clothing and food from his own pocket to give to these EVIs, as the UNHCR-funded EVI project has up until now had only resources to identify vulnerable individuals and none to provide any kind of assistance. While this type of behaviour by UNHCR staff might seem to be extraordinary, the evaluation team has encountered many situations where staff have given goods, cash or other forms of assistance to refugees they know are in desperate

Case study: Converting statistics into action: the case of Guinea, West Africa

The recent experience in Guinea and the West African sub-region highlight a number of problems related to the UNHCR's definition of and response to refugee vulnerability. Measures taken by UNHCR in response to WFP's decision to cut food assistance to refugees have raised serious concerns from outside observers. Since 1999, UNHCR's response to reductions in the amount of food being provided by WFP has been to remove numerous vulnerable and 'extremely vulnerable' from the food assistance. Staff have been asked to make difficult, if not impossible, choices about who should be cut. According to an independent beneficiary-based evaluation carried out in January 2001, "42,204 individuals who have been defined as vulnerable by UNHCR are no longer receiving food on this basis. Each time a reduction in food supply is announced by WFP, UNHCR staffs are obliged to scan their beneficiary list for categories of people who can be removed from it." (p. 12)

In a short space of time, 42,000 persons identified either as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable were removed from food assistance, and this in an area of the world already characterised by few alternative income-earning opportunities and a general situation of food scarcity. The 2001 evaluation also expressed the concerns of the refugee population with rising rates of prostitution in exile, a situation later to manifest as the sexual exploitation scandal in West Africa. By December 2001, two other assessments had flagged the significant problem of sexual exploitation of refugee women and girls in which sex was being exchanged for food provided by male NGO staff, among others. Documentation of the link between low levels of food assistance and sexual exploitation did not trigger a concerted response by UNHCR until the spring of 2002, when the worsening conditions in the Guinean camps were brought to the attention of the media, turning a well-recognised reality in the field into a public scandal for UNHCR.

When UNHCR's reaction came, it was framed largely in terms of identifying and bringing perpetrators to justice, of exonerating UNHCR and its staff, and with an optic of providing more Sexual and Gender-based Violence training and sensitisation to staff and refugee leaders. Yet training and sensitisation do not meet basic food needs, and they form only a part of a viable protection strategy. The fact that CS staff and IPs have for years been identifying and reporting on cases of persons at risk (or vulnerables) and that this information has not resulted in action from programme and senior managers, suggests a strong tendency within the Office to 'reactive' rather than preventive measures. To date, despite public scrutiny, the Operations Review Board has only approved a small amount of the

need. Among other situations encountered in the field was a CS staff person in a large urban setting who had a young female refugee staying in her home, because the girl had no where to go.

funds required to address a legacy of years of sub-standard assistance to the Guinea programme⁴³.

Given the inability of UNHCR and WFP to meet the basic food and non-food requirements of tens of thousands of refugees, and the direct link between inadequate assistance and sexual exploitation, UNHCR should have publicly flagged this situation much earlier as a major protection problem, calling on donors and the international community to act, rather than allowing common knowledge in the field to be converted into a scandal at the expense of the Office.

105. New arrivals - male, female, young or old, are often among the most vulnerable and require the most assistance to establish themselves. However, they are also likely to be the least able to access resources, not being acquainted with the refugees most likely to facilitate access to assistance, and are generally not represented among refugee leaders. In essence, they have no voice, and are doubly 'vulnerable'. In every camp or community there are those who will take advantage of others, and through exploitation, intimidation or other means. The extremely difficult conditions in which we found new arrivals in some parts of Uganda and Zambia suggest the need to carry out much more effective targeting of assistance towards these groups in order to prevent serious protection problems.

106. Due to lack of resources available to assist vulnerables, the choices made by staff and IPs frequently appear to the refugee population to be unfair. At the same time, the fact of identifying vulnerables who are, in theory, entitled to special assistance and/or resettlement sometimes becomes an incentive to be so labelled. (e.g., in Moscow, husbands miraculously returned home when a special assistance programme for female headed households was discontinued.) It is crucial that refugees be more involved in identifying local vulnerability issues and in developing community-based solutions. Refugees should be better informed about actual levels and types of assistance available through IPs, and encouraged to identify how these could be used to maximum effect.

107. There are also issues around the "counting" of vulnerables, the different definitions and terminologies used by the IPs, and the level of monitoring to ensure that statistics provided by IPs are consistent and credible.⁴⁴ In Meheba settlement in Zambia, Lutheran World Federation (the CS and camp management IP) reported to the evaluation team that 2,248 vulnerables had been identified, of which 1,400 were unaccompanied minors (UAMs). However, the Red Cross spokesperson responsible for family tracing and reunification told the evaluators that there were only 24 unaccompanied minors for whom family tracing or reunification procedures were underway. He stated that while some UAMs are orphans or have declined reunification based on fear of being forced to return home, many children

⁴³ The sub-standard level of assistance to Guinean refugees has been acknowledged in a recent SGBV Lessons Learnt exercise involving numerous UNHCR staff.

⁴⁴ The situation in Guinea, described in the box above, leads to the conclusion that either the initial process of identification of vulnerables was flawed, so that many on the list were not as vulnerable as supposed, or that being classified as vulnerable was largely irrelevant with respect to decisions about food assistance.

accompanied by the mother only, or by an adult sibling or other family member were also classified by LWF as UAMs.

- **CS staff should ensure that all IPs are utilising comparable terminology in discussing ‘vulnerable’ groups and individuals, to ensure the accuracy of statistics and better targeting of assistance.**

108. Lastly, while we focus here the activities of UNHCR staff and IPs, they are not the only actors concerned with refugee vulnerabilities and risks. In several settings the evaluation team met with NGOs not contracted as UNHCR implementing partners, using their own resources to fill evident gaps in UNHCR’s ability to protect and assist refugees. In Thailand, for example, the Burma Border Consortium had been providing direct assistance to Burmese refugees for 16 years prior UNHCR’s involvement in 1999. In Uganda and Zambia, JRS has been working with its own resources to address evident weaknesses in assistance to both urban and camp-based refugees. These NGOs provide invaluable support to UNHCR’s work, and supply vital services to the most “at risk” groups of refugees. In general, however, they appear to be little included in UNHCR’s own coordination, capacity building and programming efforts, and remain a taken-for-granted part of the refugee landscape.

Vulnerability and assistance

109. The increasing prevalence of persons classified as extremely vulnerable (EVIs) can be understood as a failure on the part of host governments, UNHCR and the international community to provide adequate and appropriate assistance or the means for self-sufficiency. CS guidelines are clear that :

“...Unless the basic physical needs of refugees are adequately provided for, social needs cannot be met effectively. The physical safety of refugees must be secured. They must have access to adequate water, food (and the means to prepare it), shelter, clothing, basic household items, preventive and curative health services.”⁴⁵

110. Food assistance remains the basic requirement for refugee subsistence (and hence protection) as well as the common currency in many refugee settings by which all other needs are met. In several settings visited by the evaluation team, food assistance levels are being systematically reduced or completely withdrawn, despite indications that UNHCR is often unable to ensure that the pre-conditions for food self-sufficiency exist (see Chapter 6 on Self-Reliance below). Where basic needs are not effectively met, vulnerability is increased and CS and Field staff and IPs are left to try desperately to plug holes. Alternatively they become cynical or despair of ever making available a decent or human level of life for refugees.

111. While the quantity of food and specific food items distributed to refugees are determined by WFP rather than UNHCR, UNHCR’s holds a key responsibility for raising public awareness of the consequences of inadequate food and other forms of assistance on refugee protection.

- **Rather than tolerating that food scarcity and related problems explode in the form of international ‘scandals’, UNHCR should pro-actively and**

⁴⁵ Community Services in UNHCR: An Introduction, p. 12.

publicly flag for international donors and governments emerging gaps in basic subsistence requirements and the consequences of these for refugee protection. CS staff and IPs, if effectively utilised by managers, should be able to document and provide analysis of the negative consequences of unmet needs that would prompt action by donors and the international community.

112. At the same time, CS staff and IPs sometimes hold valuable information about food and basic needs and the most effective methods of distribution that is rarely brought to bear in policy and decision-making. In most refugee camps and settlements, structures exist that could be used more effectively for coordinated and enhanced protection of vulnerable groups. In particular, we note that in many camps, Community Development Workers (CDWs) or social workers hired by CS IPs work along side Nutrition Monitors, Primary Healthcare Workers, Traditional Birth Attendants and Sanitation Workers, among others.

113. These mainly refugee workers constitute the front line and best sources of information for UNHCR about the problems and issues facing refugees at the household level. Yet due to sectoral divisions and the use of multiple IPs, few efforts are made to ensure that information gathered by these different groups of refugee workers are shared and drawn together into a broader analysis of key areas of refugee vulnerability.

- **CS and UNHCR staff should be more pro-active in using available information gathered by refugee workers, such as the Food Assessment Survey⁴⁶, and in encouraging/promoting collaboration between different groups of refugee workers at the community level to ensure early identification of, and common strategies for addressing vulnerability issues.**

Monitoring the impact of assistance

114. Overall, we find that UNHCR efforts to support vulnerable groups and individuals have too narrowly focused on types of 'vulnerabilities' that refugees bring with them in to exile (their age, gender, level and type of disability). Inadequate attention has been paid to vulnerabilities that are 'created' by humanitarian interventions intended to assist them. UNHCR's and host governments' rules and bureaucratic requirements often directly create various forms of vulnerability⁴⁷. In particular, it should be recognised that various UNHCR

⁴⁶ The Food Assessment Survey, carried out by Nutrition Monitors at the household level provides an excellent resource to CS staff and IPs concerned with vulnerable groups and individuals. Unfortunately, we find that few CS staff are in the habit of referring to this information or utilising it to monitor whether or not CS IPs are serving cases at highest risk.

⁴⁷ In Nepal camps for instance, if a person were found to be outside the camp without permission, that person and his/her family would be cut off from rations for a specified period of time. Such camp rules work in direct opposition to a mandate to protect the most vulnerable. Refugee leaders in the Nepal camps identified as most vulnerable those refugees who had made their way into the camps through a certain border point after the Government and UNHCR processing office there had been closed down. The existence of several hundred families of this type, without ration cards or status of any type is likely to render them among the most vulnerable, unless the community itself embraces these families and shares food and resources. UNHCR staff when asked what they were doing about this situation, reported that the estimated numbers of persons living in the camps were lower than the official figures

policies and assistance measures can frequently have unintended but negative consequences that require careful monitoring. Any and all forms of material assistance brought into situations of displacement and widespread destitution, if not properly monitored have the potential to increase, rather than decrease, existing inequalities and vulnerabilities.

115. For example in all our field missions access to education above the primary level is among the most highly valued commodities for refugees, to the point that in Meheba settlement in Zambia, we found that competition for scholarships and spaces in secondary school had become a basis for sexual exploitation. Male teachers and headmasters were accused by refugees of exploiting their positions and power, by suggesting to female students that in return for sex, their chances of getting access to secondary scholarships would be enhanced. Girls, who had won scholarships but had become pregnant, were then told that they were not allowed to attend school, as they set a 'bad example' to other students. While we do not have adequate data on the frequency of such cases, sexual and other forms of exploitation, along with bribery and corruption, appear to be the frequent result of inadequately monitored assistance measures in resource poor environments.

- **At camp level, UNHCR should hold regular protection meetings involving all actors - Protection, Field and CS staff, IPs, local government officials and refugee representatives such as youth and women's focal points - to promote understanding of UNHCR's protection mandate, share information and analysis, and monitor protection problems. Only by actively involving all actors in a camp in a discussion of broader protection issues and on-going monitoring of the impacts of UNHCR/IP interventions will UNHCR be able to achieve its protection objectives.**

Taking into account the local context

116. In Uganda the evaluation team visited Orichinga settlement, where refugee men, women and youth all confirmed that the single major protection problem facing the community was that of adequate roofing. UNHCR's assistance policy was stated to be, that one piece of plastic sheeting was to be distributed once, regardless of the duration of the refugee situation. The host government's policy was that refugees were not permitted to use 'permanent' roofs, such as those made out of tin or corrugated iron. UNHCR and host government policies did not pose a problem in other parts of the country where grasses or other replaceable materials were widely available in the local environment. In the wooded area around Orichinga, grasses were not available and refugees were forced to live in overcrowded spaces, under torn and leaking plastic sheeting. These poor living conditions resulted in rising levels of communicable diseases, leading to increased costs and demands on healthcare and available medicines.

117. This example indicates, on the one hand, irrationality in UNHCR spending, and on the other, the failure of community-based problems and solutions to be reflected in local UNHCR policy and protection priorities.

used for food distribution, and hence there was likely to be sufficient food to go around for persons not registered. The assumption here, whether correct or not, is clearly that the refugee community itself is willing and able to look after the vulnerable and disadvantaged persons in their midst.

- For UNHCR's resources to be used rationally, it appears essential that the specifics of each local context be better reflected in UNHCR's planning and policy-making at Branch Office level.
- In general, efforts should be made to determine to what refugees are vulnerable and to develop refugees' own capacity to address or mitigate those risks. Interventions--in the form of both community mobilization and assistance, should be based on a more flexible assessment of local risk factors and social capacities and resources⁴⁸.
- IPs require better tools and models for identifying when and how refugee groups and structures can be effectively used to address vulnerability issues, and when direct material assistance is most appropriate⁴⁹. IPs also require more discretion in the use of resources at the community level, if they are to be effective in promoting community-based solutions to the needs of all segments of the population.
- UNHCR, its CS staff and IPs should consider refugee 'vulnerability' as a continuum, from the 'individual' to the 'collective' or systemic. At the individual level, there may be no alternative to direct material assistance. However, where patterns begin to emerge, with risk factors affecting larger groups of the refugee population, by gender or age or other variables, these should signal the need for policy and programme changes at the local or country level.

Vulnerability and a case-work approach

118. The current system for dealing with vulnerables exacerbates a negative trend in relation to the CS function. A common complaint about CS staff within UNHCR is that they do not adequately understand their role and spend too much time on individual case management or a casework approach, which should, in theory, be left to IPs. It is a complaint of many CS staff themselves that they spend too much time on individual case management, rather than on broader issues of capacity building, coordination and monitoring of projects and programmes. However, diminishing assistance budgets lead to hair-splitting exercises over relative levels of refugee vulnerability. Such exercises take much time and effort and are difficult to delegate to non-UNHCR staff.

119. IPs, who in theory should be able to resolve many assistance-related problems on their own, are accorded so little discretion, authority and resources in dealing with specific cases or groups that they feel they have no choice but to try to involve UNHCR staff to ensure that required actions will be taken. This contributes to CS staff becoming involved in micro-management of both IPs and individual cases. Particularly in urban areas, we note that where UNHCR staff are more accessible to

⁴⁸ In practice, we find that individuals without the means of building adequate shelter or of acquiring adequate food may be given a blanket or a mosquito net, or counselling or nothing at all, depending on what goods are available for distribution. While blankets and mosquito nets can be sold for cash that can be used to purchase the labour or food that is required, this may not be the most strategic or appropriate use of resources.

⁴⁹ The CORD evaluation of its CS activities in Zambia has pointed out the problem that giving assistance to address the needs of 'vulnerables' runs counter to the principle of community self-help and community development.

both IPs and refugees, the tendency to micro-manage and mediate between IPs and refugees is particularly wasteful, and frequently leads to the undermining of the credibility of IPs in the eyes of refugees.

120. While micro-management of IPs is seen as wasteful of the time and resources of all involved, CS staff have also consistently emphasised the importance to their function of being directly aware of the problems facing individual cases. A more positive view of the casework issue was provided by one senior CS staff person who stated that “while CS staff should have a broad vision of how best to coordinate between different sectors and services to prevent vulnerability, we really only know how well we are doing unless we see how people fall through the cracks. If I wasn’t aware about the issues facing the most vulnerable refugees, I wouldn’t know what changes are necessary.”

Conclusions

121. The CS function has been inadequately utilised by UNHCR to assess the full range of vulnerabilities and ‘risk factors’ facing different segments of the refugee population.

- **As a function, CS should identify risk factors facing different groups, as well as systemic obstacles to accessing assistance and services.**
- **The CS function should thus be able to use community-based resources and available assistance in a strategic manner to prevent a certain degree of vulnerability.**
- **A higher level of transparency and coordination between UNHCR, refugees, and all assistance providers (through the provision of appropriate food and non-food items) and technical sectors (such as health, education, IGA, psycho-social counselling, etc.) is required.**
- **CS should also more closely monitor for unintended negative impacts of UNHCR interventions. In this sense, the function should be conceptualised as that related to the ‘social aspects of UNHCR’s protection mandate’.**

Refugee participation, mobilisation and self-management

“The principle that guides all Community Services work with refugees is that they should be helped to meet their own needs. Refugee participation and self-management are fundamental, assuming a respect for the capabilities of refugees and the belief that, as human beings, they have the right to control their own lives.”
(Community Services in UNHCR, p. 16.)

122. The challenges of promoting refugee participation, leadership and self-management structures, community mobilization and ‘community development’ are central to the role of CS. In much of UNHCR’s documentation, these areas of activity are largely treated as synonymous, and inadequate attention has been paid to the differences between these activities, and to the different purposes that they serve – both on behalf of refugees and of the Office.

123. These areas of activity generally relate to a set of assumptions about refugee populations as “communities”. These assumptions require some more reflection on the part of UNHCR. Refugee populations are often not ‘communities’ in an ordinary sense, with shared histories, cultures, and aspirations. They are rather ‘temporary’ settlements and groupings, pending durable solutions. They are typically deprived of the normal means to self-determination and self-reliance including recognition of basic rights, access to local services, or social, economic and political participation in the country of asylum. There is little policy analysis within UNHCR that defines or addresses the particularities and limitations to the idea of ‘community’ in refugee settings. Nor are the inherent tensions or divergent interests of UNHCR, IPs and refugees systematically analysed.

124. Below, we discuss a number of issues related to efforts on the part of CS to promote refugee participation:

- In all countries visited, CS staff and IPs are endeavouring to perform their roles through working with and strengthening refugee leadership and self-management structures, and are carrying out a range of different community mobilization activities;
- Refugee leadership and self-management structures, while essential for effective management of refugee situations are not ends in and of themselves, but means for ensuring better refugee protection and an understanding of refugee needs and realities. Refugee interlocutors with CS and UNHCR can often mis-represent and/or take advantage of their relationship – privileging the rights of the few over the majority. CS staff and IPs need better tools and guidance both to work with established leadership structures, while being able to remain in touch with and include the views of a cross-section of refugees;

- The process of facilitating “representative and transparent” leadership is essential to the task of CS. Previous evaluations have emphasised the importance of promoting “beneficiary-based monitoring and evaluation” as well as a more textured and sophisticated appreciation of the complex political and social dynamics of refugee populations themselves. Beneficiary-based research and analysis should form part of a broader and routine process of situation analysis carried out by all country operations;
- As a counter weight to formal leadership structures and committees, the CS function should also focus on support to diverse and informal refugee groups to permit a varied reading of needs and concerns of the refugee population;
- Equally important is the need for increased receptivity of policy and decision-making staff to these beneficiary-based realities.

Refugee participation: what are we trying to achieve?

“Doorman (1995) has described two schools of thought on participation: ‘social planning’, where participation is used to facilitate development efforts initiated by outside agencies, and ‘social action’ where participation is a moral obligation leading to empowerment of participants. However, in each approach naïve views of the process, as one in which communities make concerted efforts to reach shared interests, give way to the realisation that development is more commonly a struggle for scarce resources, through which internal power relations are often reproduced allowing local elites to gain the most benefits.” (Abram and Walden, 1998)

125. While the above quote refers to the concept of ‘participation’ within a development context, it is all the more relevant in refugee settings to clarify what we mean by and expect of refugee participation. ‘Refugee participation’ can take various forms and can be channelled in many directions. As suggested above, ‘participation’ can refer primarily to ‘social planning’ when initiated by UNHCR, NGOs and host governments; alternatively, it can refer to ‘social action’ when it arises from within the refugee population.

- **Given the limitations on UNHCR’s human and financial resources in the field and the numerous constraints imposed on refugee populations by host governments it is essential for the CS function to more clearly focus on the strategic purposes of its interventions, and the ways in which they further UNHCR’s overall protection objectives. In essence, the CS function should be clearer on what it can feasibly achieve through its work with refugee populations, using community mobilisation and community development techniques towards advancing UNHCR’s mandate.**

126. It is neither appropriate nor feasible for UNHCR to endeavour to create out of refugee settings ‘model communities’. The quote at the start of this chapter from a CS manual which states that refugees have ‘the right to control their own lives’ is utopic, and does not recognise or address in any way the very real limits to control the most basic elements of life for many refugees – including physical security and the means

of subsistence. UNHCR's mandate requires that refugee participation be seen as a means towards the ends of protection and durable solutions - rather than a good in and of itself.

127. Currently the efforts of the Office to mobilize and improve its ability to work with the refugee populations are moving in numerous directions simultaneously. What is required is a CS strategy to outline the goals and objectives of community-based work and appropriate methods and techniques for attaining these.

Community mobilization for the delivery of UNHCR trainings, workshops and approaches

128. We find that overall, UNHCR has a strong capacity to deliver trainings, workshops and build refugee committees and groups around specific issues. Human rights awareness campaigns, SGBV, HIV/AIDS Awareness, Peace Education and other initiatives are examples of this strategy, which promote human rights and protection issues among the refugee population. These activities are in line with a 'social planning' approach to refugee participation. They are largely centrally planned, top-down initiatives, ready-to-implement, with some refugee involvement at the delivery end. They tend to be focused on specific issues related to the Office's guidelines, are well packaged and widely being delivered to small groups of refugees in the field. Most frequently refugee leaders, community workers and others are trained, under the assumption that these individuals act as 'promoters' of concepts and approaches learned. Staff often find these workshops easy to deliver, and they may also come with special budgets which means that when cuts are being introduced to other aspects of the programme, they will not be affected.

129. These activities appear most successful and effective when refugee populations have already identified as priorities such problems and issues. They are less successful when refugees perceive these as top-down initiatives as taking place at the expense of more pressing local needs. Such community mobilisation initiatives require skilled staff who can take basic training resources and translate them into terms, concepts and activities that are meaningful to refugee populations.

130. In some cases encountered in this evaluation, both CS and IP staff and refugees actively questioned the need for numerous trainings and workshops in light of local needs and realities. Doubts have also been expressed as to how effectively volunteer community leaders and committees are able to take the messages from trainings and workshops back to the population at large. In the words of one CS staff person: "Trainings...are a big issue with me: in this region there have been innumerable trainings with little follow-up in order to measure their usefulness and true impact [on the refugee population]." CS staff and IPs frequently express the need for more support and recognition from UNHCR for the importance of a broader community-based approach that would better address issues of greater relevance to refugees.

Community mobilization and partnership-building around issues of concern to refugees

131. While UNHCR is strong in 'social planning' type exercises, this second type of community mobilization is a more difficult area for the CS function. It relates to refugee 'social action' or the ability to promote refugee identified protection concerns to the population that may not always coincide with those identified by the top-

down initiatives. Numerous issues in the areas of health, distribution of food and non-food items, housing, education and physical protection require more flexibility and better partnership-building between UNHCR and refugees if they are to be satisfactorily addressed. As described in the previous section, there are numerous cases where UNHCR's assistance policies and measures, when applied in specific settings, can have serious negative impacts on refugee protection. Refugee participation and mobilization is required, in part, to ensure that assistance and protection activities are achieving intended results.

132. While it is easy enough to mobilize refugee representatives to attend a training or workshop, it is much more challenging to mobilize refugee populations on a more sustained and consistent basis – to help build schools, to look after 'vulnerables', to staff community daycares, to carry out a range of services and functions required in refugee settings. In the field we find that while refugee groups are often willing to take a significant amount of initiative in proposing activities on behalf of their communities, CS staff and IPs rarely have the resources available to support these.

- **It is important that UNHCR's budget allocations become more responsive to specific conditions and opportunities on the ground, so as to avoid greater protection problems and higher remedial costs in the long run.**
- **Country operations should budget funds to support community-based self-help initiatives proposed by refugee groups.**
- **At the same time, CS and Protection staff and IPs must play a role in prioritising among initiatives and issues proposed by refugees, to ensure that UNHCR spending targets the highest priority protection problems first.**

133. Refugees are increasingly being expected to provide significant amounts of time, labour and service on behalf of their communities as 'volunteers'. Where refugees are required by UNHCR policy to be meeting their own subsistence needs, such expectations are found to thwart motivation and the willingness to participate on behalf of their communities (see next chapter on self-reliance). However, we found positive examples in Uganda and other field sites of CS staff and IPs assisting refugee groups to look beyond UNHCR's resources – helping them develop proposals and projects directed at other donors. Given UNHCR's financial crisis, we consider that a positive outcome of community mobilization work is to assist refugee groups to find alternative resources to achieve their objectives.

134. Overall, we find the ARC training and module on Community Mobilisation to be excellent resource for CS staff and IPs, who often find that they lack the skills and experience to overcome the challenges involved in mobilizing refugee populations around pressing protection concerns.

- **UNHCR should ensure that all CS staff have the opportunity to benefit from ARC training, with particular emphasis on its Community Mobilisation and Situation Analysis modules.**

Refugee leadership and management structures

135. Refugee 'participation' is in all cases reviewed, not direct but mediated largely through leadership councils, committees and organisations that speak on behalf of their 'constituencies'. The issue of refugee leadership is central to the CS function, and UNHCR policies increasingly emphasise the need for community-based solutions and approaches. To achieve many of its programme and protection objectives, UNHCR requires that refugee populations be able to generate representatives who can act as interlocutors for IPs and UNHCR, channel information to and from the grassroots, and simultaneously advocate for the best interest of the population. Traditional leadership structures often act as gatekeepers to wider access to refugee populations. While essential for the effective management of refugee situations, the composition, interests and capacities of leadership and management structures must be understood and their activities in relation to the refugee population must be monitored.

136. Refugee leadership and management structures vary considerably, in terms of their effectiveness and representativeness. As a result of a high degree of community cohesiveness, some refugee populations appear better able to generate widely accepted leaders than in cases where the refugee population is more heterogeneous and fragmented. But even where refugee leadership and management structures appear to be quite democratic and effective, such as those of the camp-based Burmese refugees in Thailand and the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, our evidence suggests that individual or groups of leaders may be involved in abuses of their positions. The camps and urban areas visited demonstrated a range of challenges related to refugee leadership and representation. In particular, in parts of Zambia and Uganda where refugee camps are made up of ethnically diverse refugee populations, it is not easy to generate credible and legitimate refugee leadership and management structures.

137. An extreme case is that of Nakivale settlement in South-western Uganda, where divergent needs and unequal power relations within the refugee population have led to a violent and potentially explosive situation. Here, a small number of urban Somali and Ethiopian refugees find themselves in a rural setting, frustrated by the scarce opportunities for resettlement and the basic conditions of life very different from that to which they were accustomed. This element of the camp, though small and not representative of the rest of the camp population, has succeeded in becoming the chief 'voice' of the refugee population, dominating meetings and discussions with UNHCR and other visitors, and resorting to violence and harassment of the camp commandant and IP staff as a means of securing travel permits or other special privileges. This situation has led to a state of violence and fear that is seriously jeopardizing camp management and security. Aid workers and refugees have been put at risk, and local government officials and police are afraid to intervene, for fear of reprisal. Several Ugandan Red Cross workers say that refugees have beaten them, and some staff have been transferred by UNHCR to other settlements. This case represents the tyranny of a minority, and should be firmly dealt with by UNHCR and the Ugandan authorities before more violence erupts.

138. In the urban refugee programmes in Moscow and St. Petersburg, refugee leaders are key interlocutors who play an important role in articulating the needs and problems of the refugee population, especially in large urban settings where

refugees are highly dispersed. The CS Officer had worked closely with refugee leaders and encouraged the formation a new association of asylum-seekers from several different countries. The new association would permit refugees and UNHCR to interact more directly and effectively. While the association appeared to be enthusiastic, it faced an imminent challenge to its continuation, as almost all these “refugee leaders” were being resettled forthwith—all ostensibly because they were among the vulnerable, based on medical grounds, family situation, or other criteria for resettlement.⁵⁰

139. Numerous evaluators have also raised issues and challenges around fostering broad-based refugee participation in environments where refugee leadership is of a repressive or even predatory/exploitative nature. The militarisation of camp settings is one challenge, where armed factions may exert enormous influence and take control of refugee leadership structures, sometimes as part of a base for resources and recruitment to directly supply military activities. In Mayukwayukwa camp in Zambia, the IP, CORD, has been unable to facilitate the development of a camp leadership committee due to factionalism and disagreement over its composition. On the other hand, in Nangweshi camp, CORD faces a strong refugee leadership structure, but one which acts to control and repress, rather than empower, the refugee population.⁵¹

140. The issue of refugee leadership has been treated as relatively unproblematic by UNHCR. Staff and IPs are offered little guidance as to how to negotiate this complex, politically charged and potentially violent area. The CS function has borne much of the responsibility for ensuring community representative and self-management structures exist. Yet in the field, staff often confront ‘traditional’ leadership styles and values with which they must relate if they are to get anything done, but which have little in common with the more representative and ‘democratic’ structures that UNHCR policies would dictate.

141. This part of the CS function has been little reinforced with appropriate analytical, mediation and conflict resolution tools to address many of the challenges that arise at camp level. The EPAU-commissioned beneficiary-based evaluation of the Guinea programme identified numerous problems with refugee leadership and

⁵⁰ There is always the risk of fostering a kind of clientelism, in which those closest to the Office gain, or are seen to gain, access to special privileges.

⁵¹ “This camp council is widely perceived as the UNITA (Angolan rebel forces) leadership in the camp and many of its members held prominent office in the party while in Jamba. The first council secretary had held a military position and he was recently forcibly removed from Nangweshi and sent to Ukwimi. His successor, a woman who had a civilian position, appears more benign. However, she heads a widespread network of control in the camp, which continues to hold people in fear. It is not clear how far this fear is based on the actual power still wielded by this leadership or a continuation of the habits of many years of repression in Jamba. Whichever is the case, the leadership in Nangweshi exerts great influence over the work in the camp. This system of UNITA leadership appears to have long superseded any traditional leadership of chiefs and village headmen... It is very difficult to get through this leadership to sound out the views of the general population, as there is a very close watch on the way that strangers move around the camp, who they speak to and what is said. Some refugees who wanted to talk freely would only do so when they were sure they could speak confidentially and they were continuously looking over their shoulders. They referred to ‘the ring’, which controlled the camp, filling all the leadership positions, committees, parents and teachers’ associations and other groups. During this review, it was noticeable that the same characters kept popping up on different committees or groups.” Review of CORD Community Services for Angolan Refugees in Western Province, Zambia. June-July 2002. p. 12

self-management structures in Guinea of which staff were aware, and found them easier to ignore than to deal with. By so doing UNHCR essentially cut off a key, albeit imperfect, mechanism for negotiation and discussion with the leadership in place.

“Previous studies have raised the question of the extent to which assistance providers are cognizant of the internal socio-political dynamics of the communities of beneficiaries and other affected populations. This report suggests that while UNHCR staff are clearly aware of the problematic nature of refugee representation in the camps, they are not well informed enough to take steps to improve the situation. Only by taking the time to learn from beneficiaries about the nature of such delicate political situations, will it be possible to move forward... The time spent in camps and with refugees by field staff is currently insufficient for this to be a realistic prospect. Beneficiary-based methods of monitoring and evaluation offer an opportunity for positive engagement if the desire is genuinely there to transform Refugee Committees into viable and trusted political institutions. Beneficiary-based methods, furthermore, are capable of generating an analysis of the situation which is rooted in the reality of the local political economy, rather than in the neutral, stable world of planners”⁵²

142. Our own field observations are very much in line with these findings. The problems of sexual exploitation, trafficking of women and prostitution in Nepal’s refugee camps for Bhutanese refugees that have recently come to public attention are a case in point. While there has been a tendency within UNHCR to view this as a situation of camp leadership and self-management structures gone awry, we suggest that such an interpretation is inadequate. Based on our field mission to Nepal, key lessons to be drawn by UNHCR are:

- That early warning signs from Implementing Partners closest to the refugees were minimised or ignored by UNHCR. UNHCR should be able to respond to information and analysis of IPs and other NGO partners in a more effective and timely manner, allowing their concerns to impact on its staffing, programme and protection activities.
- That UNHCR has maintained an inappropriate level of qualified CS staff to ensure early identification of emerging social and protection problems. CS staff present reported never having received CS guidelines or other UNHCR guidelines, or any form briefing or training related to the role of CS. More senior and experienced CS staff would likely have recognised emergent social problems, and been in a position to develop appropriate programme and protection interventions.
- That despite the high standards of assistance, services and community participation found in the Nepali camps, it is none the less a long-term internment situation. Protracted refugee settings, without hope of durable solutions, lead invariably to high levels of frustration, desperation, social

⁵² A Beneficiary-based Evaluation of UNHCR’s programme in Guinea, West Africa, Kaiser, January 2001, p. 38-39.

problems and new protection issues. While qualified CS staff can identify social problems and provide ‘interim measures’ in an effort to combat these, this will not reverse the trend towards the degeneration of social conditions. Without a durable political solution for refugees, UNHCR is left holding a time bomb that jeopardises the security of refugee women and children.

Women’s representation, leadership and participation

“Insufficient participation of refugee women in decision-making is a barrier to the full implementation of the Guidelines. At all the mission sites officials agreed that refugee consultations with both men and women were essential to effective camp governance and reported positive results from involving both women in decision-making. But refugee women expressed frustration at their inability to act collectively to improve their living conditions. A narrow cadre of male political leaders dominated refugee leadership. The women with whom the team was able to meet appeared overwhelmingly to represent the better educated and most articulate sectors of the population, rather than the population at large...the challenge remains to hear the voices of those who remain outside the planning and implementation of programs.”⁵³

143. While the findings of our evaluation of the Community Services function fully agree with those of the above Assessment, we feel that the issues around refugee women’s and men’s formal participation in leadership and decision-making structures merit more detailed consideration. As is implicit in the recognition of a ‘narrow cadre of male political leaders’, both the vast majority of women AND men may be excluded from these structures, suggesting the need for UNHCR and its Community Services function to develop alternative means of establishing dialogue with and knowledge about the priorities of both genders—as well as the many segments of the refugee population.

144. In the field, we find that CS and Field staff, as well as Implementing Partners, have struggled to comply with guidelines that specify that 50% of representatives of on refugee committees and councils should be women. Considerable time and attention has been given to developing and refining election processes and frameworks to ensure equal representation of men and women.

145. It is most frequently not for lack of effort or awareness of guidelines that women’s participation in formal leadership structures is low. There were numerous factors identified in our discussions with refugee women that make it extremely burdensome for ‘ordinary’ women (and men for that matter) to participate in formal leadership circles, leading to the reproduction of the ‘narrow cadre of male political leadership’:

- In many cases, the provision of food and non-food items is not adequate to meet basic needs of refugee households. Women must devote a considerable amount

⁵³ UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines for their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, May 2002, p. 3.

of time to agriculture, foraging for food, trade or income generating activities to augment their food supply;

- Women in refugee settings visited, both rural and urban, state that they have numerous responsibilities for childcare, food-preparation, generating a family income and have little time left over to be involved in meetings. A range of other events, including queuing for food distribution or the milling of cereals, or visiting a clinic can disrupt the daily routine and make attendance at meetings difficult;
- In many cases, assistance with childcare, if available at all, is provided informally within the community, with friends or family members alternating, and may be unreliable;
- Women's lower status, lack of education and literacy skills also contribute to their own sense of fitness to provide leadership;
- Cultural rules governing the traditional relations between the sexes may also intervene.

146. A key challenge to CS staff and IPs that repeatedly arises in the field is to find an appropriate balance between traditions, cultures, values and beliefs of the refugee populations in question, and the Office's own agenda for social change that places a high value on equality of representation of women and men. Field staff and IPs frequently expressed frustration at high expectations for them to 'comply' with policy directives and guidelines, without innovative or constructive support from Headquarters and Regional Gender Advisors that recognise the complexities faced in their working environments.

147. The Guidelines on Refugee Women, while seen by CS staff a key reference for their work, are often found to be too general - providing little guidance on specific local issues and realities such as those facing refugee women in urban areas or refugee women in Islamic societies. According to one CS staff: "The Guidelines on Refugee Women should contain more best practices and chapters on women in the Islamic context... We are always talking about the conservatism of Afghan or other Muslim societies of the region, and although this is a massive portion of UNHCR's people of concern, they are not catered to in a specific way which is now urgent to rectify."

148. It may be that too much emphasis is placed by UNHCR in Headquarters on compliance with the letter, rather than the spirit of the Guidelines, and too little on strategizing on various fronts to ensure that women's concerns are heard and that they benefit equally from protection and assistance measures.

- **More effective use of participatory group work, research and survey methods would permit UNHCR to acquire a better understanding of women's needs and realities, even when they are unable to be involved in formal leadership structures and camp committees. These should be systematically utilised by trained CS and field staff to ensure that the concerns and problems of refugee women are taken into account in the planning and implementation of all programs and initiatives.**

149. Given the time and effort required for full realisation of gender equality in refugee contexts, interim strategies for better involving and listening to women, should be encouraged⁵⁴. While equal representation of women and men in refugee situations is a valuable goal, as in all societies, the more pressing questions in many refugee settings appear to be:

- As a precondition for them to stand for leadership positions, many refugee women need assistance to lighten their workload and responsibilities, and help them to meet basic subsistence needs. Well-intentioned efforts to increase women's formal participation may place an added burden on the already difficult lives of refugee women;
- CS and field staff and IPs, need guidance on how much effort should be expended to try to increase formal representation, as opposed to developing alternative methods and strategies for surveying, interviewing and/or canvassing the opinion of the mass of women not involved in formal leadership structures;
- Refugee women and men leaders and IPs all frequently question the purpose of their meetings and consultations with UNHCR staff, which can take up a considerable amount of their time, when there is little in the way of follow-up and sustained communications. If UNHCR requires more effective representation of both women and men, the burden of proof that such consultations lead to tangible results large rests with it.

Alternative methods and forums for ensuring women's participation

150. In addition to the formal camp committees and councils, there are also numerous women's forums, clubs and groups. Some are organised around income-generating activities, others are organised as self-help groups of different kinds. Some are parallel structures to male-dominated refugee leadership structures, intended to provide women with a forum for expressing their views where men are not present; others focus on providing opportunities for economic empowerment. UNHCR and donors have invested heavily in a number of Women's Initiative funds - the Bosnian Women's Initiative, the Rwandan Women's Initiative, the Kosovo Women's Initiative and the Afghanistan Women's Initiative, designed to improve women's economic independence and empowerment.

151. During the course of this evaluation, a number of cases have been reviewed, indicating different levels of success in providing alternative methods for women's participation and empowerment. In Nepal, women were actively represented on all committees. Further, a strong parallel organization exists in these camps, called the Women's Forum, which organizes, raises funds for, and manages most income generating activities on behalf of refugees. The prominence of the Women's Forum in financing and managing economic activities on behalf of the community was found to lend a good deal of power to this organisation. However, this power was shared by women and men. Although the organization has a majority of women on its

⁵⁴ Even among the most democratic and 'egalitarian' industrialised societies, no cases exist in which women compete equally with men for political office or occupy an equal number of positions in formal leadership structures.

volunteer board, men occupy the paid executive positions (president and chief accountant).

152. In St. Petersburg, a women's club had been established. To all appearances, it seemed to have mainly a social function, allowing refugee women a place to share traditional dishes, to visit with members of the implementing partner organization, and to lobby for holiday camps for their families. CS activities in St. Petersburg appeared to be attracting the better established refugee women and families, rather than providing an effective outreach to more marginal and vulnerable women asylum seekers.

153. In Uganda and Zambia, where the evaluation team met with refugee leaders, women were clearly not well represented or vocal on the formal leadership council, but yet were involved in the implementation of numerous other activities carried out by the CS IPs. They were the foster-mothers of UAMs, the caregivers to the elderly, and occupied numerous other roles in running grinding mills and organizing women's groups and committees around issues of sexual and gender-based violence. Women, despite their low profile on formal leadership structures are key to carrying out many social functions involving community-based care giving – to children, the elder and all other vulnerable groups.

- **It is crucial that UNHCR and CS staff more effectively recognise women's skills and knowledge as community workers, and that their priorities be counted along side those of formal leadership structures, rather than simply being exploited as unpaid community 'volunteers' who invariably undertake the tasks that no one else wants to do.**

Refugee mobilization around sexual and gender-based violence

154. A finding of this evaluation is that generally the more focused and 'strategic' the purpose of the group, the greater its relevance for refugee women. For example, where Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) are shared priorities of the refugee community and UNHCR, SGBV groups have been formed that appear to have a clear sense of purpose in their work. These are generally not found to be exclusively women's groups, as lessons learned from past UNHCR efforts to address SGBV have recognised the importance of male involvement in anti-violence efforts. Often they have been offered training that helps to clarify their role and relationship to the refugee community, UNHCR and IPs. The SGBV materials, unlike most UNHCR guidelines, have also been careful to identify roles and responsibilities of IPs and various UNHCR staff, which lends clarity for all actors on their specific contribution to addressing a number of pressing social and legal protection problems.

155. The relative success of efforts to mobilize refugee committees and groups around SGBV, in partly due to the fact that refugee leaders are generally informed about their role vis-à-vis other actors, and are clearly perceived as useful contributors in meeting protection objectives by UNHCR CS, Field and Protection staff, and camp managers. It is also partly due to the fact that as these activities are often funded through special funds, they are not subjected to the same severe cuts as most other CS activities. (For more discussion on CS and sexual and gender based violence, see Appendix 4).

156. However, committee members often state that they lack the resources or means to carry out necessary activities within the refugee population. Transport, incentives and formal ‘recognition’ of their role (as through badges or other means of identifying themselves to the community or local officials and police) are frequently cited as material supports that would help SGBV committees and groups to be more effective in prevention or responding to cases of SGBV.

- **Where UNHCR and IPs successfully mobilise refugee groups to address protection concerns, it is essential that these groups be provided with the means necessary to carry out their responsibilities as partners in the field.**

Issues related to the use of participatory and mobilisation activities

157. Overall, this assessment finds that meaningful refugee participation, along the lines laid out in CS guidelines and the new Community Development Policy⁵⁵ to be very low. The uneven quality of participation can be traced to, among other things, limitations in UNHCR and IP understanding of how to promote participatory processes. For example, community mobilization and ‘community development’ are largely treated by UNHCR as comparable to other elements of the care and maintenance regime; as items to be delivered to refugee populations, rather than slow and systematic efforts to build capacity and sustained working relationships.

158. This is reflected a heavy reliance on ‘implementation indicators’ rather than ‘performance or output’ indicators that would measure qualitative changes within the refugee population. Moreover, there is widespread cynicism among refugee leaders that ‘participatory’ exercises initiated by UNHCR officials and IPs are one-sided and largely pointless. Finally, there is a perception among a number of IPs that UNHCR is not genuinely committed to participatory or community development processes – and are frustrated in their efforts to utilise such approaches without more commitment to these from UNHCR. These issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

Impact of CS ‘community mobilisation’ and participation efforts on refugee populations

159. As noted above, it is extremely difficult to assess the impact at field level of field level activities to promote refugee participation, mobilization and community development. To our knowledge, few IPs have carried out systematic evaluations of their CS or CS-related activities. IPs mainly rely on UNHCR reporting formats to provide statistical data required (on numbers of trainings carried out, number of school uniforms or sanitary kits distributed, etc.), rather than an analysis of impacts on beneficiary groups or attainment of objectives. Many IPs have stated that it is extremely difficult to measure the impact of community development and mobilisation activities in the brief timeframe provided by UNHCR and using its current reporting mechanisms.

160. One implementing partner, Christian Outreach Relief and Development (CORD), with the support of UNHCR’s Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, initiated a review of its Community Services refugee programmes in Zambia and

⁵⁵ The Community Development Policy of UNHCR is entitled “Re-enforcing a Community Development Approach”, February 2001.

Tanzania, which overlapped with the agency-wide evaluation of the CS function. Both reviews examined, among other things, the question of refugee awareness and perceptions about Community Services activities carried out by the IP. Both found that while refugees are generally aware of the presence of CORD in the camps, few had any understanding of the purpose or role of CS as being to promote community self-help and involvement in their own protection and solutions; both found that “refugees view CORD’s work almost exclusively in terms of what CORD gives to refugees, rather than in terms of how CORD assists refugees to contribute to their own community development”.⁵⁶

161. In the review of CORD’s activities in two Zambian camps, only 9% (in Nangweshi) and 17% (in Mayukwayukwa) of refugees surveyed had ever participated in any activities carried out by CORD⁵⁷. This level of direct participation is not necessarily low, as most CS activities⁵⁸ are designed mainly as training initiatives to transmit knowledge and skills to refugee leaders who will then be responsible for passing these on to their constituencies. However, without systematic monitoring and evaluation for impacts, it is extremely difficult to understand either how information acquired by refugee leaders is used and transmitted to others, or the qualitative changes in security and living conditions.⁵⁹

Community ‘consultation’ versus ‘participation: towards an ethic of participation

162. As part of the Terms of Reference for this evaluation, the team was asked to respond to the question: “how often is an analysis of the basis for perception of beneficiaries towards services being carried out, so that services are adapted to some of the beneficiaries perceptions?” The response to this question is complex, as it involves several elements: that of beneficiary perception (consultation), that of analysis, and that of implementation or response.

163. On one level, refugee leaders appear to be ‘consulted’ frequently – perhaps too frequently – by IPs, UNHCR staff or outside visitors and investigators. In field visits we experienced a familiar sense of ‘refugee fatigue’ at being asked endlessly about issues, problems and ‘needs’ or improvements that could be made to improve the quality of life in camps. Refugees appear very familiar with these rituals, and are generally well able to articulate problems and needs as they see them.

164. However, once ‘consultation’ has taken place refugees leaders also complain that processes of consultation are one-sided, and that the role and meaning of the consultation process is largely symbolic, implying no sustained role in decision-making about the use of resources and project design. Endless rounds of refugee ‘consultations’ imply no responsibility on the part of the Office to act, to respond, or even to explain the nature of decisions taken or why there is no follow-up. The consultation process is generally perceived by refugee leaders as a one-sided

⁵⁶ Dick, Review of CORD’s Community Services p.18

⁵⁷ Bakewell, Review of CORD’s CS Activities in Zambia, p. 42

⁵⁸ With the exception of IGAs and assistance to ‘extremely vulnerable individuals’.

⁵⁹ Refugee respondents generally appreciate the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques used by CORD. The PRA has permitted CORD to formulate its priorities closely in line with those of the refugees. So even if the resources aren’t there to do much about it, CORD is at least using planning methods that would permit refugee priorities to be reflected in its planning.

negotiation (reflecting the inequality of power relations), with UNHCR or other visitors taking the information away with them, leaving those consulted in the dark about how this information will be used.

165. This is a problem not unique to the refugees. It is a common complaint of many IPs, CS and other UNHCR staff at field level that they feel left in the dark about policy and budgetary decisions, and used only to 'deliver the bad news' about further cuts to assistance and services. In the words of one IP spokesperson: "Those of us working most closely with the refugees always end up with egg on our face. All we would like is for the Programme Officer to sit down with us and the refugee leaders and explain the basis for this or that decision, but he is afraid to come". In the field, we find that IPs are generally left to juggle and mediate between refugee expectations and UNHCR's extremely restricted funding mechanisms, and often bear the brunt of refugee hostility and frustration with this process.

166. Where refugees do not understand the nature of the constraints under which UNHCR or IPs are acting, why there are budget cuts or delays in disbursements, nor the mandate of the UNHCR, or limitations imposed by host governments, they understandably view the inadequacy of resources as unfair, and the steady decline of assistance as a string of broken promises. This is particularly evident in the area of Income Generating Activities (IGA), vocational training, and micro-credit schemes that involve small amounts of cash or in-kind assistance going to some refugee individuals and groups, but not others. The lack of clear information and transparency about the use of limited assistance budgets, frequently leads to anger and hostility that strongly undermine countervailing efforts to increase and encourage refugee participation. Unless the terms of refugee participation are seen as 'fair', they will tend to be rejected and dismissed as self-serving on the part of UNHCR and IPs.

167. Further, in the context of diminishing resources, any assistance is perceived by refugees to be better than no assistance. Hence, refugee leaders may approve or accept initiatives that do not seem particularly relevant or useful to them, as they may fear that resistance or refusal might involve cuts to other forms of assistance. In resource poor environments, it is clearly strategic to take what is offered, hoping that some secondary benefits might arise from projects and activities provided. Such fearful attitudes do not promote honest and frank exchange between refugees and UNHCR.

168. Such issues call into question the actual willingness and ability of UNHCR to promote and encourage a meaningful, rather than a token or symbolic, level of refugee participation. Despite all the rhetoric in favour of this, the CS function has largely been left to on its own, to mobilize and organise refugee populations, as if these were goods in their own right, and not in a purposeful or directed manner tied either to the realities of UNHCR's priorities and funding, or the perceived needs and aspirations of refugee populations. Hence, refugee participation itself has largely been marginalized - or treated as a kind of occupational therapy to keep refugees busy while real decisions are taken elsewhere. This insight has led several researchers to question if it is even possible, given the dominant organisational culture of UNHCR, to establish conditions for meaningful refugee participation.

"...a centralised, top-down programme, is unlikely to be prepared to allow beneficiaries to share power and affect decision-making in the

way that true participatory work demands. UNHCR programmes are predicated on refugees and other beneficiaries functioning as recipients of assistance and not as decision makers and judges of it. Mechanisms rarely exist in such programmes for refugees to become involved in any meaningful way in discussions about the best use of resources, or about effective modes of assistance delivery." (Kaiser, p. 27)

169. It would appear that what is lacking within UNHCR, and inadequately championed by CS is an ethic of participation, that demonstrates UNHCR's commitment to participatory processes and partnership building in relation to both refugees and NGO partners.

- **It is strongly recommended that UNHCR adopt a set of 'ethics of participation' that would turn its frequent use of this term and concept into practical and concrete measures.**

Some ethics of a participatory approach

Participation should be purposeful. Under present limitations of human and financial resources UNHCR can no longer give the impression that it can be all things to all people. Efforts to mobilize refugee populations are seen to be most effective when they are linked to clearly perceived community-based issues.

The terms of participation should be clear. Questions of available resources and priorities should be openly discussed with the refugee community and its leadership.

Participation deserves a response. Throughout the course of this evaluation, refugees have complained that they are frequently called to meet, and spend a good deal of time discussing issues and plans, but are rarely afforded a response. IPs complain that they are left equally in the dark by UNHCR about its decision-making processes, yet are frequently asked to explain or defend decisions taken. UNHCR should adopt a policy that refugees and IPs need to be kept informed of the actions taken and outcomes based on consultations.

Responsibility for something requires the means to get it done. Where refugees and their organisations are entrusted with responsibility of carrying out tasks on behalf of the community, an assessment must be made of the human and material resources required to get the job done.

Expectations of 'Voluntarism' should be carefully reviewed. In the course of this evaluation, many refugee representatives have stressed that 'UNHCR work' takes a great deal of their time and resources. Especially where self-reliance strategies are adopted, refugees are increasingly being expected to provide for their own needs. The time of refugee leaders, both men and women, has a real cost, as it takes them away from their own subsistence activities. Where refugee leaders and workers are not compensated by UNHCR for their time, they may turn to extracting resources from fellow refugees who are less able to pay.

Transparency in decision-making processes is of paramount importance. To the largest extent possible, it is important to include credible refugee representatives in decision-making related to all assistance and income-generating activities on behalf of the refugee population.

Beneficiary-based evaluations and assessments

170. CS Guidelines and the new Community Development Policy (CD) set ambitious goals for UNHCR to include refugees in the 'planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation' of activities carried out on their behalf. To a large extent, while several positive examples exist within UNHCR and IPs, such statements are largely rhetoric-- mainly because the CS function, which has been entrusted with key responsibilities in the area of refugee participation, is too weak to impose required changes in management and decision-making styles on the Office as a whole.

171. EPAU has initiated a number of beneficiary-based evaluations of UNHCR programmes. Two such studies are the Beneficiary-based evaluations of the urban programme in New Delhi and the Office's Guinea programme. Through this process, EPAU has helped to document refugee perceptions, and problems arising with UNHCR's field operations. These evaluations have promoted/modelled research and analytical methods that should be taken up by individual country operations. The challenge for EPAU and UNHCR as a whole is to ensure that beneficiary-based evaluations, along with all other evaluation activities, are used to effect change in management and operational practices.

UNHCR's community development policy and its implementation

172. The 2001 Community Development policy "Reinforcing a Community Development Approach", adopted in February 2001, has been received with some confusion by UNHCR staff interviewed. Some staff believe that the policy pertains only to the CS function and staff, as the policy re-iterates much of what is already contained in CS guidelines and manuals; others believe that with this policy, the Community Services section has now been re-named the 'Community Development Section'. Many question and requested clarification about the implications of the policy for their work. The Chief of the Health and Community Development Section (in January 2002) informed the evaluation team that the policy was actually an agency-wide policy and that the community development approach was intended to be 'mainstreamed' throughout the Office's operations, although how such mainstreaming is to take place has not been identified.

173. Some confusion may have arisen from Section D. 'Staff' under 'Operational Implications' which states: "To reinforce the cross-sectoral community development approach, community services staff and their partners should continue to work directly with the refugee communities. Moreover their responsibility for inter-agency and inter-sectoral coordination needs to be strengthened, and a direct link established between community services and the management of operations."⁶⁰ From this it may be assumed that CS is largely responsible for the implementation of the

⁶⁰ Reinforcing a Community Development Approach, February 2001, p. 4

policy. If not, management must clarify what its role is, and what are the Office's expectations of other functions in achieving the policy's objectives.

174. Based on broad discussions and consultations with UNHCR and IP staff, our assessment is that the Community Development (CD) policy brings little that is new – in the way of concepts, tools or guidance – to those already working within the CS function to promote community-based approaches. Nor does it assist staff who are unfamiliar with concepts and methods of 'community development' to better understand its relationship to their work or how to implement such an approach. It does not do credit to the years of accumulated experience of senior CS and other staff in how to promote and facilitate the participation and 'empowerment' of refugee groups in different operational phases and local contexts. Nor does it do justice to the extensive thinking that has gone on within UNHCR about the pre-conditions and strategies for promoting economic self-reliance.

175. While a range of issues related to the CD policy and approach are discussed elsewhere in this report, an overall criticism of the policy, is its paternalism towards refugees – and the lack of a critical and forward-looking reflection on UNHCR's own operational issues and institutional culture that mitigate against enhanced refugee participation and inclusion in decision-making. If its usefulness is to render explicit the fact that if donors, host governments and UNHCR take a CD approach seriously, UNHCR must invest in its own 'community development' capacity. This requires appropriately trained staff experienced in community development methods and approaches, able to influence the planning and policies of country operations in line with these.

176. In the field, we find many NGOs have for years been advocating and trying to implement community development approaches in their work with refugees. They express frustration with UNHCR's short-term, relief-delivery orientation, which they see as incompatible with community development, which is by definition a slow, steady and longer-term approach that does not always produce immediate or easily quantifiable results. It has frequently been commented that while the policy promotes refugee 'ownership' of all phases of activities implemented on their behalf, UNHCR is far too top-down and bureaucratic to be able to respond effectively to local initiatives and development opportunities. In the words of one IP: "The generalised point here is that management styles matter. An organisation that has not developed a participatory, empowering management structure cannot run a participatory programme. The way things are organised in the offices will have an impact on the operations on the ground. For all its rhetoric about participation, UNHCR's systems and management structure do not facilitate the participation of refugees or even its implementing partners in the field."⁶¹

177. Based on our review, while many country operations would like to implement the CD policy, they require operational guidance, practical tools and professional support to do so. Experienced CS Officers with a background in community development work and approaches are in a position to provide mentoring and training required. An important pilot initiative of implementation of the CD policy was undertaken by UNHCR Ukraine in 2001. A senior community development specialist, with some 20 years of experience as a facilitator and trainer in community

⁶¹ CORD. Evaluation of CORD's Community Services Activities on behalf of Angolan refugees in Zambia, p. 36

development processes was seconded by Save the Children Norway to UNHCR Ukraine for a period of three months. Her role was to put in place a community development process to identify refugee needs, problems and solutions, involving refugees, UNHCR, local government and other stakeholders. It was envisaged that a team of UNHCR staff could then carry such a process forward. Through her activities, she modelled how to implement a community development approach with urban refugees, and provided professional advice and support to staff.

178. This experience was seen as extremely positive by staff and the CS Officer involved. However, the pilot initiative also raised a number of concerns. A CD process requires a good deal of staff time to implement and follow-up with actions and outcomes. According to the seconded CS Officer, UNHCR Ukraine, though very receptive to the idea of a CD approach, was not prepared for the amount of staff time involved, and all team members were already very busy with numerous other tasks. A CD approach also requires skills and experience. With no one in the office with the required level of experience, it was unclear whether UNHCR Ukraine would be able to carry the process forward. While UNHCR Ukraine originally felt after the training that it did not require a CS post in the office in order to implement a CD approach, some months later a CS post was requested.

- **The CS Unit should undertake a review of the impact of the CD secondment and training received by UNHCR Ukraine on its capacity to operationalise the CD policy.**

179. Based on our findings, we suspect that while the short-term secondment imparted valuable skills to UNHCR Ukraine, without additional and sustained CS input, it may prove difficult for staff to fully implement the concepts and methods required by a community development approach. Based on the experience of UNHCR Ukraine, the CS Unit in Headquarters should explore lessons learned and possibilities for extending Community Development support to other country operations.

The issue of 'mainstreaming'

180. Overall, our assessment is that while crucial in the medium to long-term, it is a strategic error under current circumstances to attempt to 'mainstream' a community development approach at this time - making all staff responsible and 'accountable' for implementing techniques, practices and approaches that they do not adequately understand.

181. A common misconception within UNHCR about the idea of 'mainstreaming' is that that saying something is so makes it so. This is 'mainstreaming by decree' and is ultimately ineffectual because it leaves staff without the tools, context or capacity to adopt new work methods. A viable approach to mainstreaming - be it of gender issues, children's issues or a community development approach requires a strategy and a timeframe for arriving at desired goals and specific targets. Only when these targets are reached can an organisation say that it has effectively 'mainstreamed' a process or approach to problem solving.

182. In the case of UNHCR's community development approach no strategy, timeframe or targets have yet been set. While it is the ultimate goal that all

Protection, Field, Programme staff and country operations adopt such an approach to problem solving strongly advocated by this evaluation, this requires a process of planned change and an investment of resources to get there. It requires mentoring, team-building, and training in community development and community mobilisation techniques, as well as structural changes to programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, many of which are outlined in this report.

183. Currently, UNHCR has neither an appropriate level of in-house expertise to promote the extension of required skills and methods to all staff members, nor has it put in place appropriate management structures to be adequately responsive to community-based approaches and initiative. Without the required investment by UNHCR the CD approach will remain words only.

- **Rather than assuming mainstreaming of a CD approach, UNHCR and donors should strengthen and resource the CS function to develop a coherent strategy to extend required skills to staff members of all functions of the Office. Through a trained, experienced staff and the strategic involvement of partners and external consultants, the CS function should model and transmit to others the use of community development methods and techniques for enhancing refugee protection.**

Refugee self-reliance

184. This chapter explores some of the assumptions that underlie this idea of refugee self-reliance, the achievement of which has typically been seen as part of CS work. It reviews the limits of “self-reliance” in some refugee contexts visited, and some of the consequences of promoting self-reliance where the preconditions for self-reliance have not been established. The case of Uganda is presented in some detail, as it illustrates how illusive the achievement of refugee self-reliance can be, even under the best of circumstances.

CS responsibility for self-reliance

185. Refugee self-reliance is another area for which the CS function has been entrusted broad responsibilities, but in which CS staff are not generally called upon to help shape the policies and approaches that could help to strengthen the viability and success in reaching self-reliance objectives. Two notable exceptions have emerged from our case studies – those of Uganda and the urban programme in Moscow, in which CS staff have played a key role in defining the terms for refugee self-reliance, with positive results, as will be described below.

186. The Framework for UNHCR involvement in Self-Reliance, Employment and Micro-finance (1997) identifies key policies and practices that country programs should put in place in order to create appropriate conditions for refugee self-reliance. Unfortunately, we find that many country operations lack a coherent strategy in which all UNHCR staff have a role to play. To date, viable refugee economic self-reliance or self-sufficiency remains an illusive option. Yet, along with enhanced educational opportunities, the top priority identified by refugees interviewed is access to credit and other income generating activities—for men, women, and youth alike.

187. Self-reliance is the *de facto* policy and practice of most field operations that the evaluation team reviewed and visited. In these settings, food and/or cash assistance are being gradually phased out, or are recognised to be below the required amounts for subsistence.

Combating the ‘dependency syndrome’

188. In general, we find CS guidelines and manuals, as well as other UNHCR documents, replete with references to refugee ‘dependency’ and the need to build or impart to refugees a sense of ‘self-reliance’. One role of the CS function that is consistently referred to is that of helping refugees to retain or regain their ‘dignity’, by combating the ‘dependency syndrome’, which is seen to be a tendency inherent in refugees. We find many of the concepts, terminology and articulation of the CS function to be singularly unhelpful because they repeatedly “problematize” the refugee, rather than focusing on the role that UNHCR’s own management and operating procedures play in creating ‘dependency’ and narrowing the scope of

refugee self-sufficiency and 'self-reliance.' Clearly refugee dependency is also the product of host government regulations limiting freedom of movement and the right to work or engage in economic activity.

189. In the field we heard numerous references to the need to get refugees to stop being so 'dependent', as opposed to a focus on creating appropriate conditions for refugee self-sufficiency. This occurs despite the fact that our findings and a consistent body of evidence from other research and evaluations confirm that in all settings, refugees are actively engaged in every possible type of productive work, based on the opportunities and resources at their disposal⁶².

- **We recommend that all references to refugee 'dependency' be avoided and that policy documents, guidelines, training and work methods be systematically oriented towards a vision of refugees as assets rather than as an economic burden. Such a view makes it easier to negotiate more favourable terms with host governments. It places the focus on UNHCR's role and activities directed at ensuring the pre-conditions for effective self-reliance and facilitating fuller refugee participation and inclusion in decision-making.**

'Self-help' and 'self-reliance'

190. Within UNHCR, the terms 'self-help', 'self-management' and 'self-reliance' are often used interchangeably, providing no guidance to CS staff on how, in practice, to achieve the Office's different and numerous policy objectives. Although the CS function has become responsible, in many cases, for 'self-reliance' activities, CS guidelines and manuals provide little clarity as to the meaning of this term. The 2001 Community Development Policy also emphasises the idea of refugee self-reliance, without specifying what this term means and entails.

191. The Protection Checklist (July 2002) defines as a desired end result that "Refugees are empowered to better meet their protection and assistance needs." An indicator that this goal is being accomplished is "increasing numbers of refugees becoming self-reliant." This language illustrates self-reliance is a "becoming," presumably a process of the refugee individual, family and community becoming less dependent, and moving toward greater control over his/her life and circumstances, i.e., becoming empowered. In these contexts, refugee self-reliance does not specifically mean economic self-sufficiency, but something broader. It speaks also to how camps and refugee situations should be managed, i.e., in ways that make refugees less dependent on assistance, and facilitate that they have choices, options, and some control over the events that govern their lives—some kind of participation, and some opening up of economic opportunities. UNHCR would presumably attempt to accomplish the latter through vocational training, formal education, negotiations with host governments, revolving funds and other forms of income generation assistance (IGA).

192. However, much of the discussion of self-reliance frames the issue in more narrow terms. How can refugees be made to become economically independent of

⁶² See Hyndman (1999), Cutts (2001), Barbara Harrell-Bond (1986), CORD 2002, Kaiser (2002) among others.

UNHCR? Self-reliance strategies then become strategies for removing refugees from the clientship of UNHCR—to get them off the dole, off the list. Under this view, a refugee who is removed from assistance rolls is by definition “self-reliant.” From the point of view of the refugee, if s/he is still barred from entry into the local economy, has insufficient land of a quality to provide subsistence, and cannot provide for her/his family s/he is suddenly much worse off than before. Self-reliance should not be used as a euphemism for “no longer a beneficiary of UNHCR assistance.”

193. A distinction is required between ideas and policies about refugee ‘self-help’ and those about refugee ‘self-reliance’. ‘Self-help’ is a broad category of activities oriented towards strengthening refugees’ capacity to organise themselves collectively to identify and address key protection concerns at the community level, and mobilize resources from within the refugee population to meet common goals – i.e. building and staffing a school, assisting the most ‘vulnerable’, community mobilization around SGBV and children’s rights, etc.

194. ‘Self-Reliance’, on the other hand, has evolved within UNHCR mainly as an economic term referring to the ability of refugees, as individuals and households, to meet their own basic subsistence needs. The expectation is that as refugee households begin to provide for part of their subsistence, UNHCR-WFP food and other assistance can gradually be reduced and eventually fully withdrawn.

195. Refugee self-reliance has often been framed as an ‘interim solution’ – not a durable solution, because refugee economic activity, where it is tolerated, is rarely accompanied by legal provisions that lead to eventual naturalization for the majority of the population. The transition from care and maintenance to ‘self-reliance’ is a challenging and complicated area that UNHCR management has largely delegated to the CS function in the field, without any recognition of the related policy, human or financial resource implications⁶³.

196. For economic and cost-cutting reasons, self-reliance policies are being widely adopted by country operations. A large part of the impetus behind the adoption of self-reliance strategies and approaches within UNHCR is the high cost both in human and financial terms, of continuing to maintain large care and maintenance operations.

197. The adoption of self-reliance policies has consequences in terms of the ability of UNHCR to achieve other policy objectives. The ‘self-help’ and ‘self-reliance’ aspects of CS work are in some ways antagonistic. Evidence from field missions indicates that where refugees are expected to be self-reliant, it is more difficult to mobilize communities around key protection concerns, or to generate refugee leadership and

⁶³ There has also been little questioning within UNHCR of the validity of the concept in non-Western societies, where individual survival strategies are often bound up with those of the extended family or kinship network. Shelly Dick, in her review of CORD’s Community Services to Congolese refugees in Tanzania, identified the cultural bias in the use of the concept of self-reliance: “When asked, some refugees interviewed said ‘self-reliance’ is a word they rarely used in the Congo. They suggested that in Congolese society to be reliant on self is not common. Instead, people look to their families for assistance and support. This suggests that ‘self-reliance’ is perhaps an imposed Western concept, and the Congolese may not value ‘self-reliance’ in the same way that aid workers do. ‘Family or community reliance’ may be a more appropriate word to use.” (p.22). Thus, refugee self-reliance may be more rightly identified as a group process, rather than one at the individual or household level, as often assumed by UNHCR policies.

active participation. Where refugees are expected to be 'self-reliant' one cannot assume they will contribute large amount of volunteer labour to addressing collective social problems. Efforts to promote 'self-reliance' place a premium on the time and energy of refugees, who must increasingly expend time on meeting survival needs.

Pre-conditions and critical benchmarks for refugee self-reliance

198. Much excellent work in the area of refugee self-reliance has been done by the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section (RLSS, and its predecessor RSRU) to outline some of the terms and condition under which self-reliance strategies can be successful⁶⁴. RLSS has clearly and correctly identified the multiple challenges that UNHCR has to face if it is serious about refugee 'self-reliance', rather than simply using the rhetoric to justify cost cutting. According to the Draft Policy Note "Promoting the Productive Capacities of Refugees in Asylum Situations" a meaningful approach to refugee 'self-reliance' would involve a major adjustment in UNHCR's own institutional culture from its current relief-delivery orientation towards a more 'developmental' approach to refugee hosting areas. It would also require a much more strategic approach to its internal and external working relationships. UNHCR would need to work toward some "critical benchmarks" for effective self-reliance. Critical benchmarks identified by RLSS are:

- "Political will of the host government to allow human development through empowerment, and consider refugees as active development agents.
- Existence of a legal institutional framework enabling refugees to fully exercise their civil and socio-economic rights in the country of asylum.
- Substantial technical assessments and feasibility studies in areas such as: consequences of various settlement patterns (dispersed/concentrated), site(s) selection including proximity to local communities, land availability and usability, soil quality, water-shed management, sustainable use of other natural resources, labour market studies, small-scale business development, farm to market access etc.
- The strategic planning process at the outset of a new operation should be solution-oriented, whereby an assistance strategy for a temporary asylum situation should not be confused with a permanent solution.
- Systematic and sustained gathering and analysing knowledge of the psychosocial and socio-economic aspects of the welfare situation of the displaced populations, including socio-economic interactions between refugees and their hosts. UNHCR

⁶⁴ Among key policy documents and guidelines produced by and available from RLSS are the RSRU/PTSS Self-Reliance Manual, The 1997 "Framework for UNHCR Involvement in Self-Reliance, Employment and Microfinance", the 2001 Draft Policy Note "Promoting the Productive Capacities of Refugees in Asylum Situations" and the Draft self-reliance checklist entitled "Promotion of (Maximum) Self-Reliance of Refugees and Returnees". It should also be noted that the Self-Reliance Strategy for Uganda: 1999-2003, provides an excellent model of a comprehensive country-level self-reliance strategy, that merits considerable attention from UNHCR senior management and planners interested in promoting refugee self-reliance.

should not establish parallel systems of information gathering but feed into existing statistical and development indicator systems such as CCA and HDI.”⁶⁵

199. The challenge posed to UNHCR to achieve these benchmarks is formidable. In practice, we find that even under the best of conditions, host governments, UNHCR and the donor community are unable to manifest the political will and financial commitment (and hence suitable legal and institutional frameworks) required for a broad development approach to refugee hosting areas. Hence the status quo of ‘care and maintenance’ persists.⁶⁶

Self-reliance and protection

200. Where CS staff are criticised it is often because they are not seen to be effective in ‘instilling a sense of self-respect and self-reliance’. One Protection Officer characterised the role of CS in the following way: “Why is it that most refugees never turn to UNHCR for assistance but make their way on their own? As Protection staff, our role is to ensure that the rights of refugees are respected and protected. The role of CS is to ensure that refugees take on their responsibilities, and that they are not dependent on handouts from UNHCR. This is where CS is often not doing its part.”

201. What if the Protection function is unable to ensure that refugees’ rights are respected and protected? While there may exist cases where refugee social, economic and human rights are respected and protected and refugees remain ‘dependent’, we are unaware of these. The vast majority refugee settings are characterised by the inability of UNHCR to negotiate appropriate conditions by which refugees can effectively and legally exercise a reasonable degree of ‘self-reliance’. Such situations present serious operational constraints and limitations to the expectation of full refugee self-reliance.

202. The reduction or phasing of assistance, where sufficient analysis, planning and programming for self-reliance have not been carried out, only serves to heighten the potential for conflict among refugees and host governments/populations, and to create new and serious protection problems for refugees:

- Beatings, harassment, threats and extortion from refugees who are apprehended outside of camps;
- Corruption of officials who see the informal and often illegal participation of refugees in the labour market as opportunities for harassment or extortion;

⁶⁵ Draft Policy Note, “Promoting the Productive Capacities of Refugees in Asylum Situations”. November 2001, p. 7.

⁶⁶ UNHCR has the mandate to provide protection and to co-ordinate the relief efforts in favour of refugees. Moreover, the organization prides itself for its recognized competence and capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance even under emergency conditions. However, both mandate and emergency capacity seem to have fostered an organizational culture focused by and large on relief delivery, thereby leading into protracted care and maintenance situations. Attempts to plan and implement projects geared at closing the “relief – development gap” and to promote the human development of refugees have often failed because of lack of resources. As a consequence, the support of strategies aimed at promoting the productive capacities of refugees, for which UNHCR might not always have the necessary funds and/or technical expertise is not pursued, and the delivery of non-targeted (= “blanket”) assistance is being continued. (Draft Policy Note)

- Rape and sexual violence against women and children who leave the camp/settlement to gather food, carry out piecework, or other activities to meet basic needs;
- Sexual and other forms of exploitation of the most vulnerable segments of the population who are deprived of alternative means of meeting basic needs.

203. To be effective, a viable self-reliance strategy cannot be delegated to any one function of UNHCR, but requires a high degree of concerted effort by all functions, and consensus and coordination between UNHCR, host governments, donors, NGOs and refugee groups. CS staff and IPs are generally tasked at field level to provide opportunities, training and support to IGA and self-reliance activities; Programme staff provide the resources and Protection must endeavour to ensure that host governments respect rights of refugees to a livelihood.

204. The draft policy "*Promoting the Productive Capacities of Refugees in Asylum Situations*," illustrates the long-term commitment needed toward the socio-economic development of refugee populations in the context of their host communities. Where UNHCR is unable to make this commitment, and lacks the resources, the adopting of 'self-reliance strategies' amount to simple rationales for imposing cuts to field operations.

Self-reliance and the CS function

205. Overall, our field missions and survey questionnaires demonstrate that CS staff require much more training, resources and support if they are to act as effective supervisors, monitors and coordinators of UNHCR supported activities in the areas of skills development and training, employment creation, income generating activities, marketing and micro-finance. Each of these areas represents a large and specialized field in itself, beyond what can be expected of most generalists. This area is also difficult for IPs, particularly to identify appropriately skilled staff and specialists who can combine CS activities with the requirements of implementing effective income generating and skills development activities.

206. Until recently staff and IPs have not been provided with adequate tools and support to develop viable programming able to demonstrate significant impacts in increasing refugee production and incomes. Based on field missions, we note that UNHCR and its country programmes have also invested too little in trying to meet too many needs and objectives.

207. The range of issues and findings that could be discussed concerning CS and self-reliance is too vast to be summarised effectively in the context of this report. We have therefore focused our discussion below on the area of micro-credit initiatives financed by UNHCR, as this area represents a pressing and frequently expressed need for refugees, and one which has not been easy for CS staff and IPs.

Targeting of income generating and micro-finance activities

208. All the camps and refugee situations visited had carried out some types of small-scale income generating support programs (IGA). In some cases materials

were supplied ranging from pairs of breeding animals and agricultural seeds or plantings, to seeds and plants for kitchen gardens. Loan and micro-credit projects have helped in the establishment of small shops, bakeries, chalk-making facilities, and weaving factories. In many instances these small-scale economic activities are directed at producing or marketing goods or services needed by the refugee community itself. In other cases external markets are sought.

209. Among the key issues raised by the Framework is that of appropriately targeting of groups and individuals to receive start-up funding and credit. It advocates targeting the poorest, particularly women refugees, who are likely to use their earnings for the benefit of children, and who have been shown to be the most likely to repay loans.⁶⁷

210. Where income generating activities exist, CS staff and IPs are often responsible for the design of these activities and the targeting of recipients of support, although they may not have the knowledge or access or expertise required to design micro-credit and income generating activities (IGA) that actually produce an income for refugees. The poorest of the poor, as the frequent target for income generating initiatives, may simply be too needy to invest the inputs provided rather than putting them to current consumptions.⁶⁸ These projects in UNHCR are most often not developed with an awareness of key principles for successful IGA. This is particularly the case in refugee situations where economic calculations among refugee households are predicated on highly imperfect information and a high degree of unpredictability.

211. One common form of IGA currently offered by CS IPs is in the form of micro-credit (small loans) provided through revolving funds.⁶⁹ We find that in most cases, micro-credit schemes have been established and implemented in a manner that does not respected established principles for successful micro-credit schemes, largely because CS and IP staff are not sufficiently aware of what these principles are (see Appendix 5: Box on Grameen Bank: Lessons Learned), or because they are attempting to cover numerous resource gaps through the use of micro-credit schemes.

⁶⁷ "Self-reliance programmes should be primarily targeted at the economically needy active groups duly recognised as refugees/returnees, IDPs and other groups of concern to UNHCR. Within these groups, women, and especially female-headed households, sibling headed households and adolescents and youth who are alone, should be targeted as a matter of priority. Targeting women is particularly important because income earned by them is more likely to benefit children and the overall family. Poor people, including refugees, are indeed creditworthy and experience has shown that, to date, they - and particularly women - have performed well in repaying loans. In view of the financial constraints and time required for UNHCR to effectively reorient its approach, the number of beneficiaries to be reached by credit programmes will be necessarily low in the initial phase, making targeting a very important exercise." Draft Policy Note, p.4

⁶⁸ "Finally, it must be asked if supporting an income generating activity is the most appropriate way to assist the poorest of the poor. Business, whether livestock rearing, manufacturing or trading, demands that one holds onto assets and add some value to make a profit. However, if one is struggling to feed ones children today, it is very difficult to keep hold of the business assets until they make a profit tomorrow. Goats are likely to be sold or eaten before producing any young; cloth may be sold before being made into a dress; and the stock of the shop may be consumed. Keeping back any income to reinvest in new stock or materials is even more difficult. Helping a person to launch an IGA may simply prove to be equivalent to giving them another, more subtle, form of one off grant and it may well be less efficient." CORD Zambia, p.42.

⁶⁹ Funds that are loaned, repaid with interest, and form the basis for future loans to new recipients.

212. Micro-credit schemes have sometimes been introduced and then suspended as in the case of Uganda and the Russian Federation, as staff have been unable to identify appropriately qualified NGOs, with a strong record in micro-credit and revolving fund management, willing to extend their services to a refugee clientele.

213. Based on experiences of IPs in Uganda and Zambia, we find that repayment rates have generally been extremely low – between 20 and 25%, in comparison with successful micro-credit initiatives in other developing countries that have repayment rates of 95 to 98%. This occurs despite the fact that interest rates charged by UNHCR initiatives are much lower than those of more successful programmes. In some cases reviewed by the evaluation team, UNHCR’s revolving loan funds were charging interest rates of not more than 2%-2.5% over a six-month repayment period (4-5% per annum), whereas lessons learned from the Grameen Bank model recommend monthly interest charges of 2-3% (24-36% per annum).

214. Higher rates are typically charged because revolving loan funds should be sustainable, meeting their operating costs and also growing with time in order to reach an ever expanding clientele. CS staff and IPs seem to base interest rates on what they feel is ‘fair’ to the refugees, rather than what is required for the survival and growth of the revolving fund itself.

215. Successful micro-credit initiatives also prioritise a range of follow-up and training activities to provide on-going support to recipients of credit, which may focus on literacy, marketing and entrepreneurial skills development. While extensive follow-up and support services add to the cost of fund operation, they also contribute to the likelihood of loan repayment. In the field, we find that credit is usually given only after the recipient has received some basic business training, but IP staff responsible for the management of micro-credit funds are stretched very thin, and do not always have the time, skills or resources to provide the kinds of support needed by recipients of credit to ensure their ability to repay.

216. IPs implementing micro-credit schemes on behalf of UNHCR have recognised that the UNHCR ‘ownership’ of revolving funds has a direct impact on the ability of IP staff to collect on loans. Whereas private sources (loan sharks, or other community-based credit groups) can collect interest rates up to 100 times what UNHCR charges, revolving funds operated under the aegis of UNHCR are sometimes viewed as just another entitlement (as with food assistance or other forms in-kind assistance). This affects refugees’ sense of urgency or need to repay.

217. The importance of peer support and pressure for loan recipients to repay has not been understood in most UNHCR micro-credit schemes. The Grameen Bank, for instance, generally provides loans to groups of five persons, who together are responsible to ensure that repayment is made. A borrower does not receive her/his loan until the previous recipient has repaid the amount in full. It is through group encouragement, support and pressure that recipients repay, not out of some sense of loyalty towards a large international organisation. In the field, we found that refugees’ repayment was generally a ‘private’ affair, between the refugee and CS IP staff. Thus refugees only felt the repercussions of non-repayment when loan schemes ran out or were suspended. Subsequent groups of refugees who did receive not their loan experienced this as unfair. (See Appendix 5 on Micro-credit strategies.)

218. In Nepal, loans were provided with the understanding that refugees should repay when their small businesses began to generate profits. The actual level of profitability has been difficult to monitor, and hence most loans have gone uncollected. These loans were administered through the Refugee Women's Forum, who felt little incentive to actually collect on loans, but used the position of issuing "loans" to "vulnerables" as a way of enhancing their status within the refugee community.

- **Generally, we find that micro-credit schemes are designed with too little involvement and accountability on the part of refugees, and would be more effective if refugee representatives played a greater role in establishing and disseminating the terms and conditions of loans, encouraging the formation of recipient groups, participating in the allocation of loans, and as well as in their collection. Ultimately, refugees themselves have far better information than either UNHCR or IPs about the actual ability of loan recipients to repay, and a vested interest in seeing higher rates of repayment and the growth of revolving funds.**

219. It should be noted that many IP staff acting as CS, Community Development and social workers were ill at ease with the role of loan collector. They stated that where they acted as 'social workers' to vulnerable individuals, it is difficult to turn around and play the heavy when it comes to loan collection. It is considered a good practice to separate the functions dealing with assistance and services to vulnerable refugees, and support for income generating activities. Each requires different qualifications and ways of relating to the refugee population.

- **In general, CS staff and IPs require better training, resources, tools and models to effectively design and implement micro-credit and micro-finance initiatives. A positive development in this area has been a new forthcoming UNHCR policy on micro-finance that will provide guidance and best practices to staff in this area. Another positive development is a joint ILO-UNHCR training on "Micro-finance in Conflict Affected Communities". All CS and Field staff tasked with the design and monitoring of micro-finance initiatives should be encouraged to take this training.**

220. A key problem in this area is that UNHCR staff do not frequently or systematically turn to local experts, beyond their own IPs, who may be able to provide additional technical support in areas the highly specialised and technical fields related to promoting refugee economic self-reliance.

- **UNHCR and CS staff, where they do not have the skills or time to carry out required socio-economic research, market/financial surveys and analysis could look to local universities and other research institutions for support in specific technical areas.**
- **It is recommended that CS staff tasked with the supervision, monitoring and coordination of socio-economic empowerment initiatives, employment generation and income generating activities be allocated small, flexible budgets to carry out baseline socio-economic and market/financial research directed towards enhancing refugee socio-economic empowerment. Many local research institutions (universities, think tanks, CBOs, and others) have skills in this regard. In addition to providing much needed field-based analysis upon which to base programming, this would contribute to**

forging new links with the local research community on refugee-related issues and encourage local capacity, interest and innovation in addressing the overall development needs of refugee-hosting areas.

The case of the self-reliance strategy (SRS) in Uganda

221. The Self-Reliance Strategy in Uganda, introduced in 1999, clearly represents one of the best attempts by UNHCR to put in place a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to refugee economic self-reliance. In Uganda, well before the introduction of the SRS, as in Zambia, refugees have been granted land and the right to use it for agricultural production. However, in Uganda, far more so than in Zambia, a comprehensive strategic plan was developed through which key elements of a viable self-reliance strategy can now be implemented. EPAU should evaluate the SRS in Uganda by the end of 2003 to assess its effectiveness in meeting its original objectives.

222. This evaluation has not set out to evaluate the Ugandan SRS per se, but to draw from it various implications for the CS function. The Ugandan case is also noteworthy in this context, because its successes are very much linked to the strength of the CS function within the country operation, and the role assigned to senior CS staff in the late 1990s in spearheading, articulating and advocating for an innovative vision of the role of UNHCR in this protracted refugee situation. If the SRS has achieved as much as it has in Uganda, it is largely to the credit of UNHCR Uganda's senior management, which in the period leading up to the launching of the SRS in 1999, allowed senior CS staff and well-supported CS and Field staff at the sub-office level to play a strong role in strategic planning and design for the country programme as a whole; in advocacy and consensus building with both high level and local government officials; and broad responsibilities for coordination of various sectors and stakeholders to ensure a unity of approach.

223. The structure of the Ugandan operation has also favoured the ability of CS staff to play an appropriate role vis-à-vis other functions at all levels. The senior CS officer at Branch Office, answers directly to the Deputy Representative, rather than being sub-ordinate to either the Programme or Protection functions, and is a member of the senior management team. This senior CS officer also coordinates and supervises the work of a combination of CS and Field staff at the sub-office level and in the urban area, creating a direct relationship between CS activities in the field and the policy and decision-making of management at BO. As the SRS has placed heavy demands on the CS function, and management has clearly recognised the importance of CS staff for the success of the SRS, BO Kampala has fought to maintain CS positions, despite consistent cuts to CS positions in other parts of the agency. Many of the CS IPs are also delivering a range of other sectoral activities, including income-generating activities and vocational training that are seen as critical to the success of the SRS.

Achievements and limits of Uganda self-reliance initiatives

224. Key achievements of the Ugandan Self-Reliance Strategy are found by the evaluation team to be:

- A high level of acceptance of the principle of Self-Reliance for refugees by all stakeholders, not seen in most other country operations reviewed;
- Integration of key services to refugees with those offered by local government service providers, leading to the phasing out of some functions previously performed by NGO IPs;
- Food self-sufficiency based on refugee agricultural plots has led to a reduction in the quantity of food assistance provided by WFP;
- Refugee representatives on local district-level structures and councils;
- Initial steps to coordinate with other UN and donor agencies;
- The development and promotion by UNHCR of new refugee legislation to enhance the rights accorded to refugees in Uganda.

225. However, despite important steps taken by UNHCR Uganda, full implementation of the Ugandan SRS and economic independence of the refugees is far from achieved:

- Integration with local health and educational services, among others are not easily achieved, and is perceived by refugees as withdrawal or decline in services;
- Government services providers financially supported by UNHCR, do not provide the same level of record keeping and accounting as IPs, and it is difficult for UNHCR to ascertain/ monitor the level, quality, and accessibility of services contracted;
- It is unlikely that fuller integration of refugee services with those of nationals will favour the types of rights-based, training and sensitisation initiatives promoted by Headquarters,⁷⁰ as the strong emphasis of the SRS on addressing local 'development' issues sets the agenda. As services become locally integrated, refugees are being supplanted to some extent in provision of these services (e.g. as teachers);
- Introduction of the new refugee legislation has been stalled, and it has been suggested that there is ultimately a lack of political will to push through reforms that would extend to refugees significant rights, including, eventual naturalization.

226. *Land, taxation, and local integration issues:* The government has not carried out the gazetting of land used by refugees-- meaning that refugee's land tenure rights remain uncertain. Issues of refugee taxation remain problematic, since taxation in Uganda is linked to voting rights and the Ugandan government is not prepared to give refugees the vote. While the CS function has been actively putting in place some of the grassroots requirements for self-reliance, in the form of income generating activities, producers associations and community-based initiatives, the role of the Protection function and senior management in negotiating the legal basis for the SRS

⁷⁰ E.g., Girl-child education, SGBV, ARC, HIV/AIDs Awareness and Peace Education.

appears to be weak. It is important to note that in Uganda, as opposed to most other refugee operations, it is the Protection function rather than CS, which is seriously understaffed, and hence limited in the time that can be devoted to promoting the adoption of an adequate legal framework to support refugee self-reliance.

227. *Local data gathering:* Overall, given the ambitious nature of the SRS and the clear identification in the original strategy paper of the types of analyses needed on which to base projects and activities, we find that UNHCR has invested little in gathering and analysing basic information required to develop strategic initiatives in favour of refugee self-reliance. This low level of investment in information and learning on the part of UNHCR is reflected in low credibility among IPs and other actors who question the role of UNHCR as lead agency when it does not have the tools or analysis to coordinate resources and activities that actually lead to refugee self-sufficiency.

228. *Vocational training and income generating activities* in the field remain extremely limited. Crop production, for consumption or for sale, remains the backbone for the SRS. Several vocational training courses, micro-finance, production and 'apprenticeship' schemes have been initiated, but these are operating on too small a scale, with too little return-on-investment generated to have a significant impact on such a large refugee population. Craft, carpentry and metal workshops often lack power tools and access to local markets, and operate largely on the basis of the continued supply of materials by UNHCR.

229. *Food assistance has not yet been phased out*, and many refugees remain fully or partially reliant of food assistance. A key problem is that despite the generosity of the Ugandan government in allocating land to refugees, plots are often too small to meet basic needs. Poor soil fertility and declining fertility from overuse are also affecting the production of refugees, who must not only meet their food requirements but also generate a surplus from the land to meet all other basic household needs. As protracted refugee situations persist, more land is required as new generations of children, particularly male-children, grow to adulthood, if they are to have a hope of eventual marriage (bride price). Food insecurity continues to be a major problem for a large percentage of the refugee population, leading to enhanced vulnerability and the creation of new protection problems⁷¹. It appears that unless additional arable land can be made available to refugees, the majority will remain reliant on varying levels of food assistance.

Support from the UN and donor community

230. Efforts by UNHCR management to attract other donors and UN agencies and establish development initiatives serving both local and refugee groups have been extremely limited. The original SRS document was clear that the development needs

⁷¹ The UNHCR Uganda Country Report for 2001 identifies that food insecurity continues to be a serious problem facing refugees: "The current situation shows that only 24% of the refugees are able to produce their own food and 35% are still dependent of full food ration. The group of refugees receiving reduced rations (41%) is at a greater risk than the rest because the quantities received are insufficient to cover household food gaps. Most refugees in this group end up supplementing their food need by selling their labour to the nationals for cash or in kind, selling their livestock or even sometimes giving their daughters away in early marriages for dowry. Other stress coping mechanisms such as prostitution and thefts, became widespread in and around Impevi refugee settlement in Arua district." p. 12.

of Northern Uganda are many and far too extensive for UNHCR to address, given its limited technical expertise and financial resources. For the SRS to be successful, UNHCR must be proactive in convincing donors and districts government that “maintaining and improving health, education, income-earning, etc. in refugee hosting areas...is development and not relief.”⁷²

231. There is little agreement about the precise role that UNHCR should play in attracting and coordinating other agencies and donors to take up activities in refugee hosting areas, and whether in reality, it has the capacity to do so. For example, a spokesperson for the Resident UN Coordinator in Kampala stated that other UN agencies have looked to UNHCR to play a leading role in coordinating inter-agency activities in the North, based on its long presence in the area and experience of implementing the SRS.

232. The perception of the UN Country team was reportedly that UNHCR had dropped the ball, relinquishing its leadership role to UNDP, which felt that it was not well placed to assume this responsibility. It was also suggested that different work styles and institutional cultures made it difficult for UNHCR to collaborate effectively with other agencies. For example, UNDP prefers more participatory approaches to local development, and views UNHCR approach as too top-down and bureaucratic, limiting the scope for effective collaboration. From UNHCR’s point of view, leadership has effectively been provided in the form of the SRS itself, which recognised that UNHCR has neither the means, nor the technical capacity to meet the development means of the refugee hosting areas. It is now time for other agencies with those competencies to take over in their respective fields. According to UNHCR, there is very little that UNHCR can do to take an effective lead in the broader development process, other than flagging that it should happen and it should include refugees.

Moving from ‘relief’ to ‘development’

233. The Ugandan case demonstrates the challenge for UNHCR of moving from a ‘relief’ to a ‘development’ approach to refugee situations. Many assert the need to bridge this gap, and find the solution to be to ‘bring on board other donors and development actors’. Yet this is evidently not easy in Uganda, given that UNHCR’s human and financial resources are limited, and primarily oriented to meeting ‘core’ objectives of ensuring basic levels of refugee assistance and protection.

234. The transition from relief operations to ‘development’ assumes an environment of relative peace and stability in which longer term investments can be made. A serious constraint in the Ugandan context in 2002 has been LRA attacks on refugee settlements that have required much time and effort on the part of staff, IPs and refugees to relocate some refugee camps to safer areas. Such events upset the establishment of strong economic links to the previous settlement area, and investments that refugees and IPs have made in establishing entrepreneurial activities. Thus ‘external’ constraints may limit UNHCR’s ability to negotiate the transition from relief to development, where violence and physical insecurity are endemic.

⁷² Strategy Paper on Self-Reliance: Self-Reliance for Refugee Hosting Areas in Moyo, Arua and Adjumani Districts - 1999-2003. p.16.

- **For UNHCR to effectively play the role of lead agency among other development actors, it requires information, analysis, staff and work methods that would facilitate the development of concrete approaches and project proposals (formulated either by the district or central government) to form the basis for interagency collaboration. If UNHCR is serious about playing a role in promoting longer-term development goals for refugee hosting areas it must invest in longer-term partnerships and outward looking capacities.**

235. In the absence of these, the approach appears to be that other donors should simply take it on the 'development side' because UNHCR does not have the capacity to do so. But as all agencies have their own agendas, there is little evidence so far that they will take the initiative in helping to make the SRS a success, or similar strategic self-reliance initiative attempted in other country contexts for that matter, without considerably greater investment, outreach, partnership building and leadership of UNHCR in the process.

- **Managing the illusive transition from relief to development requires firmer understandings with host governments, and stronger partnership with international development agencies, such as UNDP. If UNHCR is serious about playing a role in managing this transition, senior management should focus its attention on countries such as Uganda and Zambia, where much headway has been made, but much remains to be accomplished to ensure full refugee economic self-reliance.**

236. The SRS in Uganda also threatens the credibility and role of UNHCR as lead agency among Implementing Partners and Operational Partners who increasingly identify their own resources to supplement the extremely limited investment that UNHCR can make in creating the foundation for viable refugee self-reliance. Where UNHCR's partners bring their own resources to supplement meagre loan funds and supports to help stimulate refugee production, the question they ask is 'What is the role of UNHCR as lead agency... where neither resources, nor analysis, nor coordination are provided?' In the complex and specialised area of economic development, they find that UNHCR in general, and its CS function in particular, are unable to provide the requisite technical support, analysis and coordination to justify a strong role as lead agency.

- **If UNHCR is serious about developing the productive capacities of refugees and refugee hosting areas, it should look to strengthening the capacity of the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section (RLSS) to provide specialist support to field and country operations, and to provide much-needed training and tools to CS and Programme staff tasked with coordinating UNHCR's efforts in this area.**
- **Provided they have the means to do so, UNHCR's country operations, in conjunction with RLSS, should explore the possibility/opportunity of establishing small-scale, locally adapted "integrated zonal development", for the mutual benefit of both refugees and the host communities. Under such a scheme, within a designated 'host area' or zone, skills training, micro-finance, or other income-generating activities could be provided to both local and refugee workers. Through skills training and their purchasing power, UNHCR and IPs should consider supporting the**

establishment of projects which produce goods and services needed and consumed by both refugees and local populations.

CS in relation to other key UNHCR functions

237. This chapter outlines how the CS function interacts with several other key functions within UNHCR, both in terms of mandate, as well as in operational terms in the field. The functions discussed are Programme, Protection, and that of the Children's and Gender Units. Where available, we have directly provided the views of senior managers and CS staff as expressed through the electronic surveys, as well as through workshops and field interviews. The views and conclusions from a focus group with Protection staff are also highlighted.

CS and programme

238. In several cases reviewed, CS plays a central role in shaping and orienting the content of activities carried out on behalf of refugees, with limited or no knowledge of the financial resources and contracting arrangements in place to provide these services. Education, for example, is an area commonly 'supervised' and 'monitored' by CS staff. Field operations face numerous policy, strategic and practical decisions that relate to appropriate curriculum content, language of instruction, differences in the ability of girls and boys to access education, number of staff and spaces required at various levels, appropriate ratios of male to female staff, problems related to the recruitment of appropriate numbers of female teachers, etc. These constitute the content of the services provided to refugees. CS staff are tasked to orient and coordinate IPs to ensure that educational programmes (and other programmes) meet basic refugee needs, as well as respect UNHCR's guidelines. In this sense, CS is not an ordinary 'technical sector' but one that plays a coordinating role between other technical sectors to ensure the harmonisation of policies and approaches on the ground.

239. The financial management of these same sectors is often performed by Programme staff, who largely determine initial budgeting, as well as cuts that may have to be made later in the year. It is commonly perceived as a problem in the field that issues related to the substantive requirements of field-based activities and services are poorly understood by Programme Officers. Programme Officers are frequently seen by IPs and CS staff to make cuts to specific sectoral activities without adequate information about the consequences and impacts in the field. At the same time, Programme Officers frequently state that CS staff have a poor understanding of the financial aspects of programme management. Clearly, the current division of roles and responsibilities between CS and Programme leads to wasted effort and resources, and financial decisions that may seriously jeopardise the rational and effective delivery of services to refugees.

- **It is recommended that UNHCR explore alternatives to the current separation between the substantive and financial management aspects of service delivery to refugees. It should consider, for instance the model of UNICEF, in which the Programme Officer's role in relation to specific activities is comprehensive - including initial needs assessment,**

programme design, contracting of required resources, financial management and evaluation.

CS and programme working relationships

240. In general, we find that a good personal rapport and a sense of mutual respect is the best predictor of successful collaboration between CS and Programme functions. The urban refugee programme in Moscow is a good example of a close and respectful working relationship between CS and Programme colleagues, which permitted a high degree of initiative and effectiveness of the CS Officer, and carried through into innovative approaches to the refugee assistance policy and educational services. However, good inter-personal relationships should not be relied upon by UNHCR. What is lacking in documentation reviewed relevant to all UNHCR functions is a clear articulation of the roles of each type of staff vis-à-vis the others. CS guidelines recognise the principle that :

“CS must be planned and coordinated among themselves and in relation to other refugee protection and assistance measures, rather than regarded as independent activities. An integrated approach means that refugee needs and problems are seen comprehensively, since action in one area is likely to affect others.”⁷³

241. However, these and most other UNHCR documents provide no practical examples of how UNHCR functions enhance and complement one another. Few CS staff have benefited from Programme Management and Protection training, which would provide them with a broader overview of UNHCR’s other functional responsibilities and approaches.

242. The question ‘Where does CS belong? Was frequently raised by UNHCR and IP staff over the course of this evaluation. In the words of one former CS Officer: “Ideally, the CS function would come under the Programme function – under the Sr. Programme Officer, for example. Programme is where the money is, and CS should be able to have its greatest influence there.” Others, such as the 2002 Children’s Evaluation, have argued that for CS to be more effective, it should come under the supervision of the Protection function, and within the structure of DIP. The irrationality of current management approaches to the CS function makes it difficult to find solutions that are sound, but also ‘realistic’ within the current financial context of UNHCR. In an ideal world, it might be more appropriate for Programme to come under the CS function, rather than vice versa. By this we mean that social and situation analysis should form the basis for programming and decisions about human resource requirements and budget allocations.

- **In the field, it would be preferably to place CS staff directly under the Head of Office, rather than subordinate to the functions of Programme or Protection. This would make clearer that CS has its own mandate and role to play. While it is crucial that CS closely coordinate activities and work with both Programme and Protection, it should be able to focus on its own unique mandate, and have this taken into account on an equal footing with the mandate of other functions.**

⁷³ UNHCR, “Community Services in UNHCR: An Introduction” p. 16.

243. In preceding sections we described how even where CS staff and IPs have systematically identified protection risks and widespread vulnerabilities, this information is not effectively translated into action and adjustment to the programme by UNHCR. As we have seen, CS staff are frequently sidelined in budget allocations, policy- and decision-making within the office, often on issues that are directly linked to their assigned work and responsibilities. In some cases described to us by CS staff, they are the last to know - even after IPs - when activities and budgets developed jointly with IPs and refugee groups are cut.

CS and the protection function

244. There is a growing recognition among UNHCR staff and IPs that the relevance of the CS function hinges upon its ability to meet key institutional priorities.

- **Given UNHCR's funding limitations and budget shortfalls, UNHCR must focus more effectively on its core protection mandate. For the CS function to be considered more than a 'luxury' of refugee operations, it must demonstrate in practical terms its contribution towards achieving this mandate.**
- **Community mobilisation, 'participation', 'self-help' and 'empowerment' cannot be seen simply as ends in themselves, but must be part of a broader strategy of refugee protection - that begins at the social and local level - where most rights violations occur. The CS function can best do this by directly linking its guidelines, training, technical and human resources to a clearer focus on refugee protection.**

245. During the course of this evaluation, numerous UNHCR staff and IPs, as well as the recent women's and children's evaluations have emphasised the need for a broader conception of refugee protection within UNHCR. Many have advocated for the concept of 'social protection', which recognises refugee families, 'communities' and social structures as the locus of both refugee protection and the violation of rights. Some see UNHCR's Protection function, with its tendency towards narrow legalistic definitions of refugee protection, to be reluctant to acknowledge and commit to an expanded role in 'social protection' of refugees.⁷⁴

246. As a central focus of this evaluation, the role of CS in advancing UNHCR's protection mandate has been explored from various angles, through field missions, staff surveys and focus group discussions. In particular, we have sought to explore with UNHCR staff and IPs, in various ways, the relevance of the concept of 'social protection' to the CS function, and to the Office as a whole.

247. Discussion with a focus group of DIP staff in Headquarters generally indicated low support for the concept of 'social protection'. It was expressed that this concept

⁷⁴ According to the 2002 Children's Evaluation: "We find that many of the shortcomings in meeting the protection needs of refugee children arise from too narrow a conception of protection. Narrow concepts of protection, such as a focus on the legal status of the head-of-household and access to asylum, miss the breadth of risks faced by refugee children. Although UNHCR work in regards to physical protection, or personal security (most notably on sexual and gender based violence) has made significant progress over the years, the social aspects of protection are inconsistently acknowledged, let alone applied by the Office. While social protection may be a new term to many, in practice, UNHCR still often takes a more narrow legalistic approach to protection." P. 67-68

served a useful rhetorical device, to call attention to the protection problems facing different refugee groups (i.e. women, children and other specific groups), but does not itself bring anything new to the Protection function, apart from what is already contained in the 1951 Convention and other human rights instruments. The concept should not be used to fragment in any way UNHCR's Protection function or as the basis for new initiatives. Ultimately the concept does not warrant further exploration, it was suggested, as the last thing that is needed is another distraction and 'buzz word'.

248. The focus group with DIP staff also discussed their understanding and perceptions of the CS function. While their understanding of the CS function varied considerably, DIP staff tended to highlight the role of the CS function as being to:

- Facilitate provision of services (health and education);
- Safeguard basic assistance and standards of living;
- Promote refugee self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-help;
- Capacity-building, empowerment and providing structures for community formation and participation.

249. Only two of some 20 staff in attendance at the DIP focus group emphasized the relationship between the CS function and the Protection function: one stating that CS represents the 'arms of protection' in the field, the other stating that the CS function "ensures the carrying out of our protection mandate...in consultation with women, men, girls and boys".

250. By contrast, all CS staff and all-but-one senior management staff surveyed by the evaluation team strongly agreed with the statement: "CS promotes 'social protection' and should be treated as an essential part of UNHCR's protection mandate". In comments made by senior management, it was pointed out that 'social protection' is widely practiced by the CS function, but enhanced where CS works in close collaboration with the Protection function. CS staff emphasised that the social aspects of UNHCR's protection work is actually what CS staff do, although this fact is not generally recognised by colleagues or rendered explicit in CS's own guidelines. Whether through participatory processes and community-based structures, through the targeting of assistance or self-reliance initiatives, the objective of the CS function is to ensure that basic physical, social and economic entitlements are accessible equally by all members of the refugee population. Senior management staff further commented that to adequately protect any refugee community, you must take into account that "most protection problems are deeply rooted in social issues."

251. While attitudes about the utility of the concept of 'social protection' clearly differ, in reality staff of all functions agree that UNHCR is not currently able to adequately meet its protection objectives, social or not. In the words of one DIP staff in Headquarters:

"If one goes to the Annual Protection Report, Chapters 9, 10 and 11 address the issue of community involvement in enhancing the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. When one reviews the 1991 Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, 1994

Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Children, The POP Training Framework, the 1995 Guidelines on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the 2001 SGBV Lessons Learnt Conference and the Emergency Handbook – all these manuals and policies documents emphasise to varying degrees the centrality of the community (local hosts and refugees)...to enhance the protection of refugees...The argument to explore the so-called social aspects of protection is basically an attempt to identify a false gap in the protection regime. What is lacking is compliance with existing guidelines and adequate resources to ensure that the Community Development approach (2001 policy “Reinforcing a Community Development Approach) is fully implemented.”

252. Three positive developments for an enhanced practical understanding of the social aspects of refugee protection, and hence the potential for improved teamwork between the CS and Protection functions are found to be:

The Reach Out project

253. The 1999 Field Guide for NGOs “Protecting Refugees” has evolved into the Reach Out project to enhance NGOs awareness and capacity to understand and address protection issues. These tools are highly accessible to NGO partners and explicate the strong linkage between refugee rights and many of the social and assistance related services that IPs are often contracted provide. By making these links, they assist IPs to view themselves as agents of refugee protection in the field. We note however that Reach Out project workshops carried out with NGO partners in the field have not included CS staff.

- **Due to their close working relationship with NGO partners, CS staff would greatly benefit from the opportunity to participate in Reach Out workshops and should be encouraged to do so.**

The Protection Learning Programme (PLP)

254. The Protection Learning Programme provides an excellent and comprehensive overview for trainees of the theory and application of UNHCR’s protection function. It includes numerous personal histories and supporting documents, which permit trainees to come to understand many of the social-economic and socio-cultural dimensions of refugee protection work. However, while one of the objectives of the PLP is to “promote an internal team-based approach” within UNHCR, the PLP could go further in elaborating and rendering explicit the relationship between UNHCR’s protection mandate and the various functions of the Office, in particular the CS function, by providing practical examples of positive protection outcomes achieved by a coordinated Protection/CS approach in current country operations.

- **It is recommended that the Protection Learning Programme be extended to the largest possible number of CS staff.**

The 2002 protection checklist

255. The Protection Checklist, “Designing Protection Strategies and Measuring Progress” provides a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, set of goals, desired end results, suggested activities and progress indicators related to refugee protection. Many of these refer directly to areas of activity carried out and monitored by the CS function in the field – including implementation and monitoring of education, income generation, recreation, vocational training, counselling, community decision-making structures, etc. The checklist serves to group all interventions and approaches firmly under the banner ‘protection’ – lending equal validity to all interventions and activities. By doing so it helps to address the question of the need for a concept of ‘social protection’. If all activities on behalf of refugees constitute ‘protection’, then the question remains ‘which function does what?’

- **The CS unit in Headquarters should extract from the checklist a core set of ‘Protection Strategies and Progress Measures’ that pertain explicitly to its role and areas of responsibility. This would provide CS staff with an important guide and the recognition that much of what they do in their daily work does form a part of a broader UNHCR protection strategy.**

256. While all staff should be aware of all protection strategies and measures, they also require guidance as to their specific protection roles and responsibilities and how to prioritise these. The Checklist usefully pulls together in one place existing guidelines and indicators pertaining to UNHCR’s broad protection function. It provides little help in addressing the urgent need for staff to set priorities, based on limited resources and the specifics of the field context. While enumerating almost all types of field interventions currently carried out by various UNHCR staff, the Checklist does not, in itself form the basis for a ‘strategy’.

- **It is increasingly urgent for the CS function to be guided by and help to define an overall protection strategy at the country level. A protection strategy, in the context of UNHCR’s limited resources, would require a process of prioritisation between different types of field activities, based on their level of urgency and importance in addressing key protection objectives. It would also require that each staff function and partner – including NGOs, host governments and refugee groups – accept responsibilities and timelines for carrying out commonly defined priorities.**

257. While it is practically challenging for UNHCR to distinguish between the ‘protection value’ for instance, of high rents for UNHCR premises in the capital city versus a vocational training programme, or the procurement of another land rover versus more refugee income generating activities, these choices must be made.

- **Jointly, Protection and CS should be oriented towards setting priorities for country operations that will have a maximum impact on refugee protection. While this would likely lead to some important areas of activity being cut, in favour of more urgent protection needs, country operations would also have a reasoned and defensible protection strategy vis-à-vis donors, host governments and NGO partners.**

CS in relation to the gender and children's units and regional advisors

258. As we have seen throughout this evaluation, a central concern for the CS function is that of ensuring access to appropriate assistance and protection for those segments of the refugee population most at-risk of physical abuse and exploitation, inadequate food and shelter, or the means of ensuring their livelihood. This places refugee women and children, and their participation in defining the problems that they face, at the centre of CS concerns and activities in the field. Indeed, both the recent Gender and Children's evaluations emphasise the pivotal importance of CS in ensuring effective implementation of the Guidelines on Refugee Women and those on Refugee Children in field operations:

“Community Services staff have been – and remain – essential for identifying protection problems that otherwise might not be reported neither to UNHCR nor to traditional leadership structures”.⁷⁵

259. However, we find that CS function within UNHCR has not been supported to play this role. It has rather been consistently neglected and marginalized, despite its current and potential contribution to meeting UNHCR's key policy priorities. Rather than consolidating and focusing efforts to directly strengthen field operations in their capacity to address the needs of refugee groups most at-risk, UNHCR and the donor community have opted for the creation of substantial 'advisory' capacity in an attempt to address the complex issues and problems facing refugee women and children. Given the overlapping objectives of CS with those of the Gender and Children's Units and Advisors and the limited human and financial resources at UNHCR's disposal, the validity of this strategy should be duly considered.

260. The Gender Unit in Headquarters is currently comprised of three staff, including a P-5 Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women and Gender Equality who answers directly to the Director of DOS. The Gender Unit coordinates a network of six Regional Gender Advisors – located in Costa Rica, Ankara, Damascus, Nairobi, Abidjan and Afghanistan. In addition, the Southern African region has a joint Gender and Children's advisor.

261. The Children's Unit in Headquarters is currently also comprised of three staff, including a Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children who also answers directly to the Director of DOS. The Children's Unit coordinates a network of five Senior Regional Advisors on Refugee Children located in Brussels, Ankara, Abidjan, Damascus and Nairobi. Neither the Gender nor the Children's Advisors have any direct operational linkages or accountability. Their function is strictly to provide advice, based on respective guidelines and policies, at the invitation of country operations.

262. By comparison, the CS Unit in Headquarters is currently comprised of two staff, including one P-4 Senior Community Services, who answers to the Chief of the Health and Community Development Section, under DOS. The Senior Community Services Officer has a policy, advisory, training and support function in direct implementation of programs and policies carried out by some 100 staff at various levels within field and country operations. Just as the Advisors' function deals with

⁷⁵ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. “UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation”. p. 40.

complex and crosscutting themes of equity and equal treatment in assistance and protection measures, so does Community Services function. However, the CS function has even broader responsibilities for a range of other special needs groups within refugee populations.

263. Given current resource limitations, consistent cuts and under-funding of CS staff and resources, and the clear priority given by donor governments to support for the role of Advisors and 'specialist' functions in addressing the needs of refugee women and children, we attempted to explore the on-going relevance of the CS function itself, and the effectiveness of working relationships between CS staff and Gender and Children's Advisors and specialists.

264. Through surveys of both UNHCR managers and CS staff a number of questions were asked to gain a perspective on the relationship between the CS function and those of regional Gender and Children's Advisors and specialists. Among other questions, UNHCR managers were asked two questions directed at obtaining some opinion and comment about the relation between CS and the gender and children units/support functions. Asked whether they agreed with the statement: "With more specialists within UNHCR to promote the mainstreaming of issues such as those related to women and children the need for CS staff is much reduced," 88% of managers who responded disagreed. Some of their specific comments include:

- CS staff has a broader picture of the refugee social fabric, whereas the specialists see the world in a very compartmentalized way;
- While there are regional co-ordinators, the actual implementation is done in the field. In my view, specialists are one issue and implementation in the field is another one;
- Policy advice is often very general, and at times serves more a function of oversight than actual support;
- In the field, you get more confronted with reporting requirements etc. than necessarily actual support (which often means staff). In addition, policies are set worldwide, while the refugee situations differ greatly. It remains up to the field to find ways and means to actually implement it in the specific circumstances;
- I do not see great benefit from regional or HQ based specialist. I would prefer a competent country based CS person. CS are a typical example of genuine mainstreaming as they easily reconcile protection and programme objectives;
- These specialists offer little support and do not significantly affect the implementation of programs at the local level.

265. A second question dealing with the same subject asked for their agreement or disagreement and comments to the statement, "Gender & Children's specialists provide strong support to community services activities in the field". Only half of respondents agreed, and of these many emphasised *need* for such support, rather than their satisfaction with or about instances of such support actually received. A frequent response was found to be: "While the policy and guidelines provide some

general support to the field, the challenge is the actual implementation and that remains up to the field.”

266. One respondent chose to write in a final comment at the end of the questionnaire, to further address this particular question of the relation between CS and these other units:

“The role of women's co-ordinator, children's co-ordinator and the community services' co-ordinator-- I am not arguing for eliminating anyone, but rather that there must be a clear understanding throughout the house of what each does and that they should have separate, but complementary roles. It is important that all 3 work together and send the same messages on the issues of empowerment, gender, women's equality and children's rights etc. To date, although things have improved a little I believe, too much time and credibility has been lost on internal disagreement.”

267. CS staff were also questioned as to the level of support they had received from advisors and specialist staff on gender and children’s issues. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement “Gender and children’s specialists provide strong support to community services activities in the field”, 60% disagreed, and of the remainder, many could not formulate an opinion because they had inadequate experience or knowledge of these functions. Only 2 of 57 respondents commented that they had had direct contact with such Advisors. Some representative comments received were:

Typical response of CS Staff Survey to: “Gender and children’s specialists provide strong support to community services activities in the field”	
Agree	Disagree
I have not experienced such support yet so I don't know.	I am still waiting for those to provide this support. Maybe later? The gender specialist has never been here. The child specialist has been once - in the beginning of her term, without any practical outcome.
Their main impact is mainstreaming.	All they do is give instructions and draw attention to guidelines without necessarily showing how things should be done.
The work of CS is circled around the two groups and the field staff would need guidance from them.	They surely do, but so far we have not been given the opportunity to see the result of their efforts at the field level. Unfortunately, I am not aware of this support.
With the support of specialists, a training workshop on protection to refugee women and children was successfully conducted in some refugee camps in XXX with a plan to include all remaining camps.	If I wrote to them each time there were an issue they may, but I am told they work mostly at EXCOM meetings level and in international forums on behalf of the organization. I have not felt their strong support or interest even but for one admirable JPO in the Children's unit at HQ who seems committed to supporting the field.

268. Several staff also commented on the lack of clarity on the difference between the CS function and advisors roles - leading to confusion or even competition. Particularly where more senior Community Services staff work in close proximity with Regional Gender and Children’s Advisors, there is no obvious or rational way

to say where the responsibilities of one ends and the other's begin. It appears extremely important for UNHCR to bring more clarity to the distinction between the CS function and that of the Regional Advisors. In the words of one CS staff: "As my experience has been mixed, I prefer not to answer yes or no. There is still confusion in UNHCR about the role of gender/children staff and CSOs. Some specialists in encouraging a multi-sectoral approach, downplay or dismiss the importance of CS as merely working with the vulnerable."

269. Overall, our findings suggest extremely limited contact and support from Regional Gender and Children's Advisors to field/country operations. Those country operations that have likely benefited the most are those in which the Advisors themselves are based, and about which they are most knowledgeable. This points to the consistent problem that while Gender and Children's specialists and Advisors may have a good command of relevant guidelines, these are often too general to help resolve specific issues that emerge at the level of field operations. To be sufficiently aware and informed of the local context, Advisors would practically have to be in the field, or at least be able to follow closely developments there.

270. Our findings from staff surveys and interviews in both Headquarters and the field further suggest that the actual level of technical expertise possessed by some Advisors in relation to gender and child-protection issues is inadequate to meet the needs of many field and country operations. Comments made by staff, and staff of the Gender Unit itself, have been that some Regional Gender Advisors are not in fact gender 'specialists', coming as they do from the same 'generalist' background as many other UNHCR staff. While they may be in position to hire outside consultants and experts to strengthen specific refugee operations, this is not, in itself, a good enough rationale for these positions.

271. These findings are also reflected in those of the Children's evaluation. When UNHCR managers surveyed were asked as to "which specialist roles for refugee children were most useful to their field operations," 48% of questionnaire respondents cited community services, 20% cited protection and only 24% cited Regional Advisors:

"Our field missions and questionnaires revealed some worrying indications on the potential lack of effectiveness of these specialist positions. Among questionnaire respondents, most reported that they were unfamiliar with the roles or did not find them useful. Forty-eight percent of questionnaire respondents were 'not familiar' with the role of the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children and 53% were 'not familiar' with the role of the DIP Legal Advisor on Refugee Women and Children". (p.45)

Main conclusions and recommendations

272. Throughout the various sections of this report, whether on promoting refugee self-reliance, coping with refugee vulnerability, supervision and monitoring of IPs, or implementing key UNHCR policies, CS has a crucial role to play which is being thwarted by its current weakness. We conclude that the option of allowing current trends to continue, to further weakening of this function is not a rational, viable or cost-effective strategy for UNHCR.

273. CS is crucial to support and strengthen UNHCR's analytical and supervisory capacity. It has a key role in identifying and addressing field level problems prior to their eruption into international-level scandals about refugee abuse and violation of rights.

274. CS has a very significant role to play in relation to UNHCR's central protection mandate, as well as with respect to implementation of key policies on women and children. While sometimes treated as an adjunct, or luxury, support for and investment in the CS function goes to the heart of the overall effectiveness of UNHCR in meeting its mandate(s).

1. CS is crucial to support and strengthen UNHCR's analytical and monitoring capacity.

275. UNHCR and its staff invest insufficient time and resources to developing the analytical capacity, tools and systems necessary for refugee operations to achieve stated objectives. Too often the focus is simply on delivery of inputs. The lack of investment in learning about basic social, cultural, political and economic realities of refugee situations has limited the effectiveness of both assistance and protection activities. This weakness jeopardises the credibility of UNHCR as lead agency in the field, in coordinating the efforts of Implementing and Operational Partners.

276. While experienced professional CS Officers are able to utilise the limited data available and learn what they need to know from refugees and IPs, in order to develop effective CS approaches and teams, and to influence programming and protection strategies, these staff are few in number. Staff at the P3 and P4 levels typically have strong social science backgrounds lending good investigative and analytical skills. Based on personal and professional experience they are able to 'sniff out' problems and develop, with limited resources, coordinated responses across different technical sectors. They are also in a position of some authority within their offices to influence programme planning, and to be viewed as important resources by other staff. While the number of field operations reviewed as part of this evaluation are limited, Moscow, Uganda, Pakistan, and Tanzania appear to be cases where UNHCR's past and present investment in professional CS Officers has paid off in terms of an effective and coordinated role for CS, where community mobilization and participation have been effectively linked to field-based solutions.

277. Most CS staff however, are too isolated, low ranking and junior, with insufficient international experience and perspective to carry out the defined CS mandate. Often they are simply not given the scope, tools and authority to bring a social and field-based analysis to bear in terms of defining joint UNHCR-IP-refugee priorities and programmes. In many cases reviewed, IPs complain that UNHCR staff have insufficient overview, practical experience and technical knowledge to address the day-to-day problems they face in dealing with refugee realities.

278. Many staff have a very limited idea of what constitutes 'supervision and monitoring' - these being seen largely as an auditing function and for enforcing compliance with contractual agreements, rather than based on outcomes, improvements and benefits for the refugee population.

- **A major challenge to the CS function is to develop a comprehensive monitoring and coordination system that will permit UNHCR to have a detailed assessment of the risk factors facing refugee populations and sub-populations, by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, etc.**

2. CS is vital to UNHCR's lead role in coordination of IPs and other actors in refugee situations.

279. The need for UNHCR to provide an adequate level of supervision, coordination and leadership in the field is growing and changing. Based on missions and staff survey responses, it is clear that both the number and variety of partnership relationships between UNHCR and other actors is expanding.

280. While many Implementing Partners continue to rely solely on UNHCR funding to implement their CS and related activities, a growing number are supplementing UNHCR funds by bringing in additional resources from other donors. These donors are largely the same as have historically supported UNHCR itself. Some long-standing IPs are refusing to accept UNHCR funds, and opting to self-finance activities on behalf of refugees, as the costs related to the administration and reporting requirements of UNHCR are seen to be too high relative to the small sums involved. Much of this self-funding also comes from the same donor governments that are UNHCR's main source of revenue.

281. Operational Partners (OPs), or those who bring their own funds to self-identified activities on behalf of refugees, are also expanding in number. Increasingly, the transfer of services previously provided by IPs to government service providers pose new challenges to UNHCR to ensure appropriate standards of services to refugees, where UNHCR's direct control over funding is relinquished.

282. On the one hand, more partners with their own independent resources imply savings for UNHCR in direct contracting of services. The provision of services by governments implies better integration and harmonisation of refugee services with those of nationals, and the potential for more of UNHCR's investment to remain in the host country. However, government service providers also are much more autonomous than contracted IPs, and may not share UNHCR's ideas of financial accountability, approaches and policy orientations.

283. Operational partners provide much needed supplementary assistance and services to what UNHCR can provide. However, this trend also implies a loss of direct control of services and activities carried out at field level: some IPs and OPs who are bringing their own funding to field activities are questioning the role and capacity of UNHCR as lead agency, where it is felt that UNHCR does not have a sound analysis of the refugee context upon which to base its definition of priorities and coordination role.

284. The fragmentation of UNHCR's traditional resource base, with donor governments providing more direct funding to NGOs, may also suggest a lack of confidence in UNHCR's management of refugee operations, or at least a desire to circumvent UNHCR by providing direct sponsorship of particular agencies in specific contexts. As more donors and host governments provide more direct support to IPs and OPs, UNHCR is being forced to adapt its management culture to one based more and more on an effective analytical and coordination capacity.⁷⁶

- **It is crucial for UNHCR to demonstrate to its partners, including host governments and the donor community, its capacity to provide sound leadership and coordination for the attainment of objectives jointly agreed upon by all partners.**
- **This implies more than simply superficial changes, but a much greater investment in appropriately qualified CS Officers at appropriate levels within the organisation - closer to the field, and equipped with the necessary tools to provide a convincing assessment of needs, opportunities and available resources so as to better protect the rights of refugees.⁷⁷**
- **One alternative would be that UNHCR get out of the care and maintenance business altogether, sticking to a much more narrow conception of refugee protection, and leaving the question of care and maintenance to other humanitarian actors, such as we have seen in the case of Thailand. However, the Thai case also serves to reinforce the conclusion that even where UNHCR is not involved in camp management and the provision of care and maintenance, it is still not able to wholly distance itself from the 'protection' consequences of inadequate levels of refugee assistance provided by other actors. Rape, exploitation, extortion and abuse of refugees increasingly pose serious protection problems in Thailand. UNHCR's continued, although more limited presence there means that it maintains some responsibility for refugee protection concerns, despite its very limited ability to influence the underlying causes of these problems.**

⁷⁶ UNHCR in the long run may have to consider limiting its activities more to those in which it has competitive advantage, such as in emergencies. It might for instance, find it preferable to abdicate the lead agency role in many protracted situations, providing only a legal protection and monitoring role, with other services let on a contractual basis to a Government, NGO, or consortium able to take on overall coordination/management responsibility.

⁷⁷ While CS is not the only function involved in coordinating the activities of implementing and operating partners, nor should other UNHCR functions abdicate this responsibility, the CS function should be much more central in coordinating, supporting, and monitoring IPs as to their effectiveness in working with and protecting refugees.

3. CS has a key role in identifying field level problems prior to their eruption as international level “scandals”.

285. The problems that have emerged in the Nepali camps for Bhutanese refugees⁷⁸, previously touted by UNHCR as ‘the best camps in the world’, should confirm to UNHCR yet again that its current capacity for identifying social problems and protection issues at field level is extremely weak, and that even relatively ‘well-managed’ assistance regimes, from the point of view of delivering essential goods and services, and primarily legalistic definitions of refugee ‘protection’, cannot provide for the early identification of the numerous social problems that arise in internment-like refugee situations.

286. Our findings suggest that it is only a matter of time before more such ‘scandals’ will come to haunt UNHCR,⁷⁹ given its lack of capacity for early detection and resolution of problems and issues that lead to serious rights violations and exploitation. Low-level national staff who receive no systematic training in how to do social and situation analysis and have little comparative experience of other refugee settings, may simply overlook or be unsure how to address the range of social problems that invariably emerge in protracted refugee situations.

- **Existing staff require far better training and tools, as well as guidance from more senior professional CS staff to ensure that they are capable and required, through their job descriptions and work plans, to coordinate and carry out systematic situation analyses that will form the basis for the development programme and protection objectives.** (See Appendix 6: Situation analysis as a central tool for UNHCR and the CS function).

287. The time spent by CS and other staff in the refugee camps and settlements is typically insufficient to know what steps to take to address abuses of leadership or other delicate political situations. If UNHCR staff are to help transform refugee committees into viable and trusted political institutions, staff need to be capable of generating an analysis of the local social and political situation.

288. With respect to the situation in Guinea, for instance, given the clear inability of UNHCR and WFP to meet the basic food and non-food requirements of tens of thousands of refugees, and given the direct link between inadequate assistance and sexual exploitation, UNHCR should have publicly flagged such situations much earlier, calling on donors and the international community to react, rather than allowing common knowledge in the field to be converted into a scandal at the expense of the Office of the High Commissioner.

⁷⁸ On November 13-14, 2002 a seven-member international team, which includes protection, community services, management and external relations Officers, arrived in Kathmandu and deployed to the camps in eastern Nepal to investigate indications of sexual and gender-based violence in camps for Bhutanese refugees.

⁷⁹ UNHCR’s management of Meheba settlement in Zambia could easily form the basis for another ‘West Africa’ type scandal.

4. The CS role in refugee protection should be recognized and strongly reinforced.

289. There is a growing and credible body of evidence, based on numerous studies and evaluations, that where UNHCR is unable to adequately learn about and engage refugee populations in addressing community-based social and economic problems, the result is serious and widespread violations of refugees' rights. There is no need to further 'study' the question of social protection, but rather to put it into practice. This can only be achieved through mechanisms that require UNHCR to pay attention to refugee socio-cultural and economic realities.

290. It is becoming increasingly urgent for UNHCR to adopt more strategic approaches to meeting its broad protection mandate. In a context where all human rights - social, economic, cultural and political - are considered equal and indivisible, it is extremely challenging to attempt to set 'protection priorities' in the field. However, UNHCR cannot continue, given its limited resources, to try to be all things to all to all people. The result, as we have seen in preceding sections of this report, tends to be inadequate attainment of numerous objectives or of protection for refugees. The small budgets of IPs to administer toward a broad range of interventions are widely seen to be ineffectual, and on a scale well below what is required to achieve results. Also, the cost of administering such an extensive set of activities at field level becomes increasingly difficult to justify, given the low impacts achieved.

291. The social aspects of UNHCR's protection work is actually what CS staff do, although this fact is not generally recognised by colleagues or rendered explicit in CS's own guidelines. Whether through participatory processes and community-based structures, through the targeting of assistance or self-reliance initiatives, the objective of the CS function is to ensure that basic physical, social and economic entitlements are accessible equally to all members of the refugee population.

292. The validity of the concept of 'social protection' is not that it adds anything new in the way of rights, policies or guidelines. Rather that it moves towards operationalising these in a holistic way by providing a clearer orientation for the CS function, and the parameters that must shape its work.

- **In the context of financial constraints, CS programmes and social interventions must be justified on the basis of enhanced refugee protection in the field, more than on a standard set of activities that are typically carried out in all refugee situations, or required by Headquarters. A Social Protection identity for CS is simply a more suitable descriptor of what the function does, or should do, in conjunction with Protection staff, on behalf of the Office.**

5. Support for CS is the most cost-effective way to obtain progress with UNHCR policies priorities on women and children.

293. Our findings support those of the 2002 children's evaluation that emphasise the limited ability of current UNHCR planning and management procedures to adequately reflect and address emerging social and protection needs, and to identify priorities and adjust spending in line with changing field-based realities.

294. A growing body of evidence suggests that experienced Professional CS Officers at appropriate levels within country operations provide the best and most cost-effective means of attaining gender and child-protection objectives identified in respective Guidelines. On the other hand, there is no strong or compelling evidence to suggest that the current level of Regional Advisors posts, or any expansion in these, represent a cost-effective investment by the Office in better meeting the needs of refugee women and children at the field and country operations level-- if this is in fact the purpose of these positions.

- **The human and financial resources available to the CS function, Gender Unit/Advisors, and Children's Unit/Advisors should be considered as common resources to enhance UNHCR's overall protection capacity related to refugee women and children. These resources must be provided in complimentary and coordinated manner to strengthen country operations that urgently require more and better gender and age-based analysis and programme planning and delivery.⁸⁰**
- **Given limited resources, UNHCR should strive for a less fragmented, better-coordinated and ultimately more cost-effective approach to addressing the needs of refugee women and children. Donors should encourage this approach, by advocating for an enhanced gender and age sensitive CS capacity at the country operations level.**
- **Donors who strongly support enhanced UNHCR performance in these areas should take note that overall compliance with the policies on women and on children is not likely to improve without a serious investment in professional CS staff at levels closer to the field, and without major adjustments to UNHCR's planning and management approaches - away from top-down decision-making and towards country and field-level strategies more closely linked to refugee realities and protection problems.**

6. More investment in the CS function can help move UNHCR's top-down compliance oriented management culture to one more responsive to field-level realities.

295. A central finding of this evaluation has been that the multiplication of Headquarters-generated initiatives, actions, reporting requirements and other demands are creating an untenable work situation in the field. CS staff and many other staff complain that they are fewer and fewer on the ground, and less and less able to free up time from the administrative burden to get to the field, where they feel their efforts should be directed. At present, while numerous UNHCR policy and guidelines documents highlight the importance of refugee community involvement, mobilisation and participatory processes, in practice UNHCR staff is increasingly distanced from the realities in the field by the demands from higher levels within the organisation.

⁸⁰ The Bureau of CASWANAME is currently replacing two P4 regional advisors for Children and Gender in the Middle East with one regional CSO at the P4 level, who will oversee gender and children's policy implementation, and national professional CSOs in three countries in the region.

296. Generally speaking, the dominant mode within UNHCR is top-down, paternalistic, and compliance oriented. Monitoring is carried out to some extent in relation to what has been delivered, but very little with respect to differential risks and access, or in regard to the effectiveness or impacts of assistance and programming. Programmes and inputs change little in response to needs assessments or field based analyses. When a scandal of some type is impending, UNHCR attempts to contain it, and to respond with extra-ordinary measures. It should rather ensure in the first place that the level of assistance and knowledge about the local situation is adequate to avert the dysfunctional state of affairs that lead to large-scale abuses, suffering and international outrage.

297. CS is by its very mandate at odds with the organization and overall management style of UNHCR. CS is different from other functions in that it cannot succeed as long as the current management systems and culture predominate. Oddly, we view the CS role, at this juncture, in large part, to move UNHCR to be more responsive and adaptive to local realities, i.e. to change the dominant management culture.

- **UNHCR and its donors need to strengthen the CS function, and allow it to operate so as to help to change UNHCR's internal culture and management style-- to both force and assist the organization to become more bottom up, more based in local realities, and more cognizant of the refugee population's needs and potential contribution.**

7. Routine situation analyses should be integral to the CS role, and the results should form a central basis for field level planning and programming.

298. Redressing the current rigidities and limitations of UNHCR's current field-level planning frameworks is a pressing priority.⁸¹ Fortunately, UNHCR already has at its disposal some excellent materials and approaches that should be adapted to form the basis for a field-generated, protection-oriented country operations plan. The Situation Analysis tool that forms a part of the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) training and tool-kit could easily be adapted from its present orientation primarily towards enhancing child-centred analysis and protection, to application to refugee populations as a whole. (See Appendix 6 for more information on CS and Situation Analysis).

299. Based on the findings of this, and other recent evaluations, we find that systematic and routine Situation Analysis to be a cost-effective approach to the urgent need for better and more relevant planning and monitoring of field and country operations. Such a process is central to ensuring the long-term credibility of UNHCR as lead agency and coordinator of refugee operations.

⁸¹ Based on field missions and interviews with UNHCR staff and partners, it is generally perceived that the Country Operations Plan (COP) is often poorly reflects changing challenges and opportunities emerging in the field. Similarly, we find that within country operations, budgets allocated to specific activities at field-level, such as assistance to 'EVIS', vocational training and income generation tend not to reflect either the size of the population, or specific needs and constraints facing the refugee population.

- **Ultimately, Situation Analysis must lead to a strategic planning exercise, in which refugees, IPs, and host governments would be involved in setting key protection priorities, in line with UNHCR's mandate in the area of refugee protection and durable solutions. The strategic plan must be justified in terms of the key protection priorities identified at both the community and country level. All actors would also identify their specific roles and resources for enhancing refugee protection – along with timelines for achieving specific objections. It could be expected that such a process would eventually replace – or become the basis for – the Country Operations Plan, and that its achievements be reported in the Annual Protection Report.**

300. Depending on the refugee context, an annual situation analysis would permit UNHCR to have up-to-date information on emerging trends within the refugee population, and form a solid basis for programme and protection monitoring, adjustment, and self-evaluation.⁸²

- **Professional CS staff with social science backgrounds and training in social and participatory research techniques are best placed and capable to facilitate situation analysis on behalf of the Office.**

301. The rationale for Situation Analysis is directly related to that of the CS function itself: to ensure that all groups and segments of the refugee population have access to appropriate protection, assistance and services. This is not to say that management and the local office as a whole do not have an inherent interest in this type of information, and in requiring that it be carried out. However, as such situation analyses are not regularly being done at present, it is our view that it is more likely to happen if CS takes a lead role in this. In the absence of appropriately qualified CS Officers, management could assign staff from the Programme, Protection or Field functions to take responsibility of facilitating the situation analysis.

8. The level of staffing, resourcing, and support for the CS function has essentially neutered its impact within UNHCR, and needs to be redressed.

302. The downward trend in funding and staffing of the CS function has reached the point where CS has been rendered unable to achieve its mandate or purpose within the organization. This is not to say that some local contexts may not still have some excellent outcomes, particularly where the combination exists of supportive senior management⁸³ and capable and experienced CS officers and IPs. However, the potential for the CS function to affect the UNHCR culture as a whole, so that such situations become the norm rather than the exception does not presently exist.

⁸² According to the ARC Situation Analysis module: "Situation analysis should be seen as an on-going process...Frequently planning has to take place in the absence of complete information, especially at the early stages of an emergency, but the process should start at the beginning of an emergency...Situation analysis will be particularly important at various strategic stages: for example: towards the end of the emergency phase; when large-scale repatriation is being considered; when there is a new influx of refugees or major programme changes; when it becomes clear that refugees are likely to spend an extended period of time in the camp."

⁸³ No matter how supportive field management may be of the CS function, the top-down culture in UNHCR, and the demands on management to implement programmes and guidelines defined in Headquarters or Branch Office make it difficult to support, respond and adapt programming to the information and guidance provided by CS staff.

303. Part of the impetus for this evaluation seems to be an impression in some quarters that for the significant amount of resources going into this generalist and wide-ranging function, the profile and accomplishments of CS work seem rather insignificant, or at best, hard to quantify. Yet, many senior field staff and donors alike were surprised to learn that there was until recently, only one professional level CS staff in HQ, a P4; that less than a quarter of field posts have even one CS staff; and that by far the majority of CS staff that do exist are national, non-professional level staff and female, with limited ability to affect decisions in their local offices. CS staff face great challenges in carrying out their mandate in field contexts where the staff for other functions is typically much more senior, frequently with little concept of the purposes or importance of the CS function.

304. The ambiguity with which job descriptions and guidelines related to the CS function are stated, contribute to making it difficult for CS staff to deflect the many additional demands on their time-- for instance, to oversee education and health service delivery, to broadly coordinate and monitor the work of IPs; or to manage scholarship programmes, and act as focal point reporter for a host of Headquarters-defined functions. The monitoring of a range of IPs in relation to compliance with sub-agreements, or the overseeing of health and education programmes that have been developed without CS input, differs from monitoring or coordination aimed at ensuring that programmes and assistance are adapted to local realities and refugee needs.

9. The Office needs to invest in professional and experienced CS units, and not attempt at this point in time to make the CS function and approach the work of all staff.

305. The decline of CS staff and budgets is both symptomatic of the current ineffectiveness of this function within UNHCR, as well as a contributory factor. Therefore, the problem cannot simply be redressed through a policy that it be mainstreamed, or that all UNHCR staff must henceforth undergo CS training, and take on CS tasks. Even though Programme staff generally felt they should ideally spend more time away from their desks, and have more contact with IPs and refugees, they felt their workload did not permit it. While many Protection staff in the field are aware of wider protection issues affecting refugees, their focus for the most part remains on legal aspects of protection, and case by case assessments and proceedings. Neither of these functions is ready yet to add the CS function as a regular and important part of their work.

- **The organization must focus on ways to allow the CS function to operate. That is, it must find ways to allow the field-level issues and contingencies to influence decision-making and programming. Without CS staff and without significant other changes within the Organization, it is unlikely that Programme and Protection staff and field level managers will be motivated and capable to begin to compile, analyse and make use of local situational data in decision-making about assistance, programming, and protection initiatives.**
- **The CS function should not be passed on to generalist staff at this time, because the other parts of the organization are not set up to do the CS function, and cannot nor should not simply be mandated to do so by**

Headquarters. Our field missions reveal that Protection Officers and Field Officers within UNHCR themselves have little time or capacity to engage in sustained or extensive community mobilisation.

- **The predominantly legal function of Protection staff and the predominantly social function of CS staff must complement each other, rather than everyone trying to do the same thing.**

306. Years of experience with the POP (People-Oriented Planning) training and framework should demonstrate that while useful in highlighting the need for people-oriented approaches to refugee assistance and protection, these do not impart an adequate level of skill, experience or technical ability to mobilise community groups and structures around emerging protection problems, to monitor for negative impacts and adapt programmes in the context of changing conditions on the ground.

307. The CS approach needs time and support to show its value and contribution. It is most conceivable that over a period of a decade or so, CS staff would be less and less needed, as the approach advocated and mentored and demonstrated by professional CS units becomes integrated and part of the norm for UNHCR interventions of all staff. However, at this point in time, the Office needs to facilitate and support the work of professional CS units in the field.

308. At present, internal systems of incentives and of staff advancement, a paternalistic internal culture, the general flow of reporting from the field up through BO and to HQ, the system of HQ defined focal points at field levels, the general ineffectiveness of the Country and Sub-office level planning instruments and many other factors discussed here and in other recent evaluations militate against systematically learning about local situations and ensuring that such learning be allowed to inform planning, budgeting, and programming.

309. CS has many tools at its disposal, including POP and ARC, arsenals of techniques and methods associated with community mobilization and community development, as well as other methods drawn from anthropology and other social science disciplines. Nevertheless, it requires considerable insight, commitment, empathy, negotiating and other inter-personal skills, and life-experience to achieve results. Developing trust and mutual understandings also requires time.

- **That it is demanding and time-consuming does not mean it should not be attempted, but rather, that the effort to work directly and closely with large at-risk populations, such as refugees, needs to be respected, supported, and given the opportunity to be bear results.**

10. CS in the field needs considerably more support from Headquarters than is currently provided or than CS in Headquarters is able provide CS is not well situated within the Headquarters structure and a new placement should be considered.

310. Throughout this evaluation, we have found that CS staff in the field feel themselves to be inadequately supported to address the daily challenges they face in implementing the numerous policies, guidelines and initiatives developed at Headquarters. When CS staff surveyed were asked if they received adequate support from Headquarters to achieve their objectives as CS staff, only 35% answered

positively, most citing guidelines as the main form of support received. We began this report by reviewing the vast range of roles and responsibilities that CS staff have been given by the Office. We conclude that while numerous policy makers and technical specialists in Headquarters look to the CS function to implement their initiatives, there is little recognition on the part of senior management of the need for a CS unit or section within Headquarters to assist and support staff to effectively carry out their function.

311. The Community Services 'Unit' in Headquarters is currently located within the Health and Community Development Section, one of five sections under the Division of Operational Support (DOS). For the past two years, there has been one P-4 Senior Community Services Officer in Headquarters, first with two, then with one, then with no JPOs assigned to the 'unit' to provide any type of assistance. In recent months there has been one additional professional staff post provided to the CS unit in Headquarters. The CS unit in Headquarters is provided an annual budget of \$40,000 - for all travel, workshops and activities required to support the CS function in the field. It is little wonder that the perception on the part of many field staff is that the CS unit in Headquarters can do little to assist them in their roles.⁸⁴

312. A highly positive development for the CS unit within Headquarters has been the recent appointment of a former Community Services Officer with an extensive background in community mobilization and community development as Chief of the Health and Community Development Section (HCDS). The CS unit in Headquarters is able to accomplish more within an enabling environment, in which UNHCR management understands the CS function, and how to promote effective collaboration between closely related units (Education, Health, Gender and Children's Units, for example) and other functions (Protection and Programme). However, while new the Head of HCDS has a good understanding and vision of the CS function within UNHCR, human and financial resources are urgently required to address years of neglect and decline.

313. CS is not or should not be a set of services or programs, or a technical sector. However, other staff within HCDS in Headquarters are technical specialists, supporting the field-level provision of education, health services, and the like, and developing policies and tools relevant to these technical aspects of UNHCR programming. The Division of Operational Support also contains the Gender Unit and the Children's Unit. These are not seen as technical units, but as units to develop crosscutting policy and promote and advise with respect to these policies. Both the recent Children's and the Women's evaluations viewed the role of CS in the field as very different from other technical units or sections. They each viewed CS in the field as important for the effective implementation of these crosscutting policies. These units have used CS staff as focal points for reporting about, obtaining compliance with, and implementing the Children's and Gender policies.

314. The fact that CS in the field is viewed as the implementing arm for the Children's and Women's units, and also all special needs groups such as the elderly, the 'vulnerable', the disabled, as well as for technical sectors such as education,

⁸⁴ Since this information was compiled it has been brought to our attention that a new JPO has joined the CS unit in Headquarters in September 2002, and steps have been taken by the Director of DOS to strengthen the Unit further through the creation of a P3 post from January 2003. The annual budget remains small, but has been increased to \$50,000.

health, and SGBV, illustrates that CS is unlike other technical support units and other HQ functions. CS is or clearly should be about disaggregating programming,⁸⁵ about making assistance and other interventions more appropriate, based on an analysis of the local context and refugee realities.

315. If CS is not a technical sector as the others in its HQ category within the Department of Operations, and if different things are expected of it, the placement where it is will contribute to the already many misconceptions about its role. CS is a cross-cutting function in the way that the functions of the Gender Unit and the Children's Unit are cross-cutting functions, directly related to more effective achievement of UNHCR's overall mandate. It could be argued that given this role, CS should be seen somewhat in the same light as these other cross-cutting units and their functions.

- **Given its overarching role in the coordination of various forms of assistance and service delivery, as well as protection, it is seen as most appropriate, that the CS function be assigned its own section, perhaps identified as the Social Protection Section, reporting directly to the Director of the Division of Operational Support (DOS), along side, or perhaps encompassing, the Gender and Children's Units.**

11. The typical profile of CS staff needs to be revised.

316. While the role of CS staff has typically been associated with that of 'social worker', the CS function needs to reassess the validity of this professional profile. While social work training provides a good background for the Professional CS Officer, the role as described here must be conceived as one of 'programme analyst' and 'community development facilitator' more than as one of 'counsellor' to individual refugees.

- **The CS Unit, in collaboration with other staff of the Health and Community Development Section, the Gender and Children's Units, and DIP should develop a profile of the qualifications and experience required by CS staff at various levels. In particular, we see the urgent need for additional regular Professional level staff within country operations. Based on the role and required competencies envisaged here for a Professional CS Officer, we find that a social sciences background at the Masters' level would be preferred, with strong skills in socio-economic research, gender analysis, and child-centred approaches.**
- **Professional CS staff should have prior work experience with refugee and community development work, possibly in NGOs or a government agency, and the capacity to train, mentor and carry-out team building with other staff across sectoral and functional lines. There is an urgent need to do more training of field staff in community mobilisation and participatory research techniques, to help them better monitor and coordinate IPs. The national or international professional CS Officer must have the experience, skills, seniority and respect of colleagues so as to be able to train, supervise and influence others.**

⁸⁵ Including in terms of gender and age among other categories.

- Given the growing emphasis on refugee economic self-sufficiency/self-reliance within numerous country operations, it is urgent to ensure within UNHCR a capacity to carry out effective strategic planning and programming around income generation, skills development micro-finance, and employment issues.
- While socio-economic analysis and an understanding of local economic factors should be within the terms of reference for a CS Officer, as we have seen earlier, a planned and realistic transition from care and maintenance to self-reliance requires specialists, beyond what could be normally expected of CS Officers. This implies that where conditions permit such a transition, the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section will require additional technical expertise and staff to adequately support and orient CS activities and community-based initiatives.
- Along the lines suggested here, the CS Unit in Headquarters should review the “functional competencies” identified for CS staff at each level within UNHCR’s Career Management System. CS should identify clear functional competencies for its staff, to assist in clarifying its central roles, responsibilities and its focus within the organization.

12. There is a need to review and adjust the CS staff contingent in line with a more appropriate role for the CS function in support of country operations:

317. Many within and outside UNHCR appear to have no idea of the extent of understaffing of the CS function, both in Headquarters and the field, and believe it to be rather larger and better funded than it is. During the course of this evaluation, in an attempt to explore some cost-effective alternatives to hiring additional staff to support the CS function in Headquarters, we discussed with a representative of a donor government the possibility of amalgamating the CS Unit with the Gender and Children’s Unit in Headquarters. The response was total shock: “You cannot be proposing that such a small staff as that of the Gender Unit in Headquarters be responsible for supporting so many staff in the field!” The donor was very surprised to learn that up until very recently the Gender Unit had more than three times the staff of the CS Unit. Relatively speaking, the Gender Unit in Headquarters may be small, but not as small as CS, and with no direct responsibility for the performance of field-based staff.

- The neglect and decline of the CS function, in terms of staffing, budgets and related support should to be reversed.
- A serious review must be carried out by the CS Unit and HDCS to ensure that national, non-professional CS staff are adequately supervised, trained and supported to achieve relevant CS objectives on behalf of UNHCR. This requires more CS P3s and P4s, National Professional Officers, and JPOs deployed to the field with appropriate skills and the mandate to facilitate situation analysis, to train and build teams for the early identification of protection risks and problems, and to promote bottom-up approaches to UNHCR’s planning and priority setting processes.
- Given limited resources, skilled Professional CS staff may also need to be more mobile within the agency - with training, team-building and trouble-

shooting skills when needed to help deal with the most serious protection problems in specific operations.

318. However, as discussed above, it should be clear that initial investment in Professional CS staff at appropriate levels of authority within country operations provides the best hope that social and community-based problems will be recognised and addressed early on.

- **Short-term CS secondments and consultants should be used in emergencies or to address deep-seated social problems, but not as a substitute for investment in local capacity to continue the work started by the external staff.**
- **As proposed by the Chief of HCDS and the Head of the CS Unit, there is a need for a joint staffing review and selection procedure (including HCDS, CS, Gender Unit and Children's unit and possibly DIP) for additional Professional CS Officers to be assigned to high priority country operations. Such a joint hiring process would ensure that newly recruited CS Officers would have the endorsement and support of these Units and functions, and the qualifications to help UNHCR meet its institutional priorities.**

319. The recommendation of the Children's evaluation concerning staffing of the CS function is appropriate (One CS staff per 50,000 refugees), but unrealistic given UNHCR's current resources, as it would effectively quadruple the staff contingent. It points, nonetheless, to the emerging consensus that under-staffing of the CS function is intimately linked to UNHCR's inability to achieve significant progress in the area of its two policy priorities of refugee women and children.

320. In the current context, it appears essential to look to more strategic staffing of the CS function, rather than thinking purely in quantitative terms. For example, UNHCR's sustained use of IPs, JPOs, UNVs, short-term consultants and CS secondments has created corps of CS professionals with some experience in working in refugee settings. Yet because UNHCR has made no commitment to them, their skills and experience are being quickly lost to the Office.

- **The CS Unit in Headquarters should undertake to identify the most effective among these staff to augment UNHCR's regular staffing contingent of CS Officers, and DOS should liaise with the Division of Human Resource Management to facilitate their recruitment.**
- **Resources should be identified to increase regular P3 and P4 posts by 30 over the next two years. These staff should be mainly deployed to support first those operations with populations at highest risk, normally urban and rural protracted refugee situations. These staff should also identify further staffing requirements for national Professional CSOs and CS Assistants, based on the specifics of each field and country operation.**
- **The CS Unit, in close collaboration with the Bureaus, Gender and Children's Units and DIP, should undertake to identify all operations that require additional CS capacity and allocate adequate and appropriately qualified staff to them.**

321. Thirty additional posts would amount to about one CS officer per 100,000 refugees. However, we are not recommending that UNHCR simply augment the numbers of CS staff on the ground. What is key is the type and level of CS staff needed. The present contingent of CS staff is insufficient to build up credibility, and provide leadership within the Office, and to motivate and train staff from Protection, Programme and management as to the utility of CS approaches to working with at-risk populations, or the usefulness of social, cultural, and socio-economic data and analysis for strategic planning and decision-making.

13. The CS guidelines and manuals as well as the name “Community Services” and related nomenclature need to be revised.

322. CS guidelines and manuals need to be revised to better reflect its mandate for protecting refugees and the roles of staff as informed analysts and advocates.

- **CS Guidelines and Manuals urgently need to be reviewed and redirected to reflect the findings of this and other recent evaluations concerning the critical relationship between CS and UNHCR’s central protection mandate.**

323. We find that current CS guidelines and manuals do provide some sound practical advice and guidance to staff on specific issues. Much of this is a re-statement of other overarching UNHCR guidelines such as those on Refugee Women and Children. They should rather articulate the rationale for and orientation to the role of CS in advancing UNHCR’s overall institutional objectives, as well as guidance related to how CS can have a maximum impact in refugee situations, through its work with IPs and refugees, as well as within their own offices.

- **Staff require a much clearer articulation of their role vis-à-vis other UNHCR functions, as informed analysts and advocates in refugee situations.**

324. Many of the concepts, terminology and articulation of the CS function are singularly unhelpful because they repeatedly “problematize” the refugee, rather than focusing on the role that UNHCR’s own management and operating procedures play in creating ‘dependency’ and narrowing the scope of refugee self-sufficiency and ‘self-reliance’.

325. The term “Community Services” is vague and generally not helpful. It connotes little about the actual objectives or activities of the function, is poorly understood within and outside UNHCR, and reinforces the idea of UNHCR providing services for and to refugees.

- **The CS function should consider operating under a different name within UNHCR.**
- **References to refugee ‘dependency’ should be purged from the UNHCR lexicon. Policy documents and guidelines, training and work methods should more systematically be oriented towards UNHCR’s role and activities in facilitating processes of full refugee participation and inclusion in decision-making, as well as ensuring the pre-conditions for effective self-reliance.**

- **The undifferentiated term “vulnerables” should not be used, as it quickly picks up nearly the whole population in a refugee camp, provides unnecessary and unhelpful labelling of people; nor does it not go far enough in identifying what individuals and groups are “vulnerable to,” and how risks are best averted and addressed.**

14. Initial briefings, orientation documentation and job descriptions should be reviewed and revised.

326. Initial briefings, orientation and the provision of CS guidelines and manuals to new recruits have been inadequate. Many staff report having received inadequate or no briefings, terms of reference and documentation relative to the CS function from their supervisors. Few staff ever receive a briefing or induction from senior CS staff, who might be able to provide them valuable guidance and save them a lot of time in simply learning as they go.

- **It is important the CS Unit in Headquarters ensure that all new recruits receive a CS orientation package, including all relevant guidelines and documentation. This package should also go those who have been in their job for some time, but have never received an appropriate introduction to their role as CS staff.**
- **The CS Unit should, in consultation with country operations and bureaus, review the job descriptions of CS staff to ensure that these are appropriate to their level and function.**

327. As we have seen, there is a strong tendency where CS staff are not at a level of authority to define their own priorities and daily programs of work, for other staff to use CS staff to carry out a myriad of roles-- many un-related to the function for which they have been hired. A case in point, although only one of many, is World Refugee Day celebrations, that tend to take a lot of staff's time, and which could easily be contracted out or organised by more junior staff, with appropriate supervision. We have found no rational reason for the tendency to use CS staff time, particularly that of senior CS staff, for organizing such activities.

- **The CS Unit should identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities that are appropriate to CS staff from the level of CS Clerk up to the level of Senior CS Officers.**

328. It should also advocate and negotiate that staff at each level be allocated resources required to perform their responsibilities. For example, a Senior Regional Community Services Officer without the resources to travel, maintain communications with, and provide training and support to regional country operations, is not in a position to perform a regional function, if such is required. UNHCR should recognise the irrationality of utilising senior and experienced staff to carry out work that could be done by a more junior staff member at a fraction of the cost.

15. The level and orientation of CS staff training needs attention

329. In part because the mandate and role of CS has been unclear and undervalued, many have not received the training needed to effectively perform their job. In general, given their broad and diverse areas of responsibility within the Office, we find that the investment in the training of CS staff has been inadequate. While some CS staff report having received several types of training, approximately half report having received no training at all. In the words of one staff member: "There is little opportunity for CS staff in UNHCR to get formal training, and much of the work depends largely on the initiative of staff to set up and run programmes. In all my years as a CS staffer, I have only attended two workshops of a CS nature, and those were in the mid-1990s. Since that time, there has not been a single workshop which would have been useful to me or to counselling staff in how to do this type of work more effectively."

330. CS staff surveyed and interviewed have expressed the need for more training in a number of key areas, including:

- **Community Services and the relationship to Community Development:** As discussed elsewhere in this report, there has been both interest and confusion caused by the 2001 CD Policy. With yet no articulation of how to operationalise the policy, staff require clarification on the relationship between CS and the CD approach. Several staff surveyed requested training on both CS and CD in order to be able to understand their roles as CS staff and better utilise community development techniques and methods: "Practical training in how to do community development with clear yardsticks. The more practical the better with direct links to Programme and Protection. The linkages between the various sectors in UNHCR is vital to making the context and content of work of CS staff more valuable;"
 - Methods and techniques for community mobilization, capacity-building and refugee empowerment (particularly gender empowerment) and self-reliance, both related to camp and urban settings;
 - Negotiation skills for dealing with refugee communities;
 - Communication skills for dealing with EVIs and counselling of traumatised cases;
 - Financial management, programming and how to find internal resources and advocate for better utilisation of them;
 - Protection, and more specifically child-protection, sexual and gender-based violence, protection of refugee women;
 - Programme monitoring and evaluation.
- **While a number of specific trainings should be developed specifically for CS staff, staff should also be included in existing programme and protection training initiatives. Specifically, we see the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) training of trainers as an excellent foundation upon which to base further CS training initiatives.**

331. Several staff have commented that the ARC materials are both current and extremely helpful in addressing both content and methods issues related to the CS function. In particular, the ARC module on Community Mobilisation has been extremely useful to staff who have received this training, giving them better skills as well as the ability to train others, including IPs and refugee groups. As we discussed above, the urgent need for UNHCR to implement regular situation analysis as part of its planning process, also suggests that all CS staff would benefit from ARC training.

- **It is recommended that all CS staff undergo ARC training at the earliest possible opportunity.**

332. Finally, in the context of this evaluation many staff have expressed that guidelines and trainings received are most useful when they describe the different and complimentary roles of various sectors and functions of the Office in addressing common issues. In this regard, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence training, the Guidelines on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the report of the 2001 SGBV Lessons Learnt Conference tend to be much appreciated by CS staff, not only for the relevance of their content, but for their format which clearly lays out the roles and responsibilities of various sectors and functions, including CS, in addressing SGBV as both a social and protection issue.

- **The SGBV trainings and materials, as well as those on Reproductive Health, should be used as a standard for the development of future trainings on issues that cross sectoral and functional lines.**

16. CS staff require better training, tools and techniques for achieving the objectives associated with the CS function.

- **The CS Unit, in collaboration with HCDS, Gender Unit and Children's Unit and DIP should develop a Situation Analysis Framework and Exercise (SAFE) as to provide CS staff and country operations with solid baseline data, and a tool for on-going programme planning, monitoring and evaluation based on changing refugee realities.**

333. While the ARC materials provide a good introduction to research techniques, methods and tools for carrying baseline data collection and on-going monitoring of programme impacts, these are not explored and explained in sufficient depth for CS staff and country operations tasked with doing meaningful situation analysis.

- **The CS Unit, in collaboration with the Population and Geographic Data Section, should develop a short manual on how to carry out baseline assessments, surveys and participatory research in refugee settings. Such a manual would explain issues relating to carrying out stratified public opinion surveys, technical approaches to sampling, administering interviews, methodological issues associated with biases, assumptions, confidence intervals, etc., as well as some practical methods for carrying out participatory, beneficiary-based research.**

334. Linked to the above, country operations visited frequently cited the lack of resources as reasons for not gathering and updating basic baseline information on refugee populations. However, it should be noted that resources do exist to meet the

Office's information needs, and these are currently under-utilised. The Population and Geographic Data Section in Headquarters has stated that few country operations request available support for information gathering activities.

- **The CS Unit should inform staff of the resources available in PGDS, and actively encourage them to pursue appropriate information gathering exercises to enhance the quality of information available to carry out programme planning and monitoring.**

335. Lastly, there is an urgent need for better sharing and learning from the experiences of other CS staff. A particular need highlighted elsewhere in the report is the need for new approaches for dealing effectively with 'vulnerable' groups and individual cases, as well as dealing with specific CS issues in urban settings.

- **The CS Unit should facilitate a process of sharing lessons and innovative approaches between CS colleagues and country operations dealing with similar field-based issues and problems.**

336. The investment needed in the CS function is not only a financial one. Needless to say, the activities identified above will require human and financial resources well beyond the current capacity of the CS Unit in Headquarters. Many of these are urgently required to strengthen the capacity of the CS function in the field. What remains to be seen is the level of commitment of senior management and the donor community towards Community Services, and whether the legacy of neglect will continue or adequate measures will be taken to augment and re-orient this crucial function.

17. Where to find the required resources?

337. A question frequently asked of the evaluation team has been "where will the money come from?" While this is well beyond our Terms of Reference and is the responsibility of UNHCR's senior management to decide, one answer offered is for UNHCR to take a hard look at the costs incurred by simply maintaining its staff and presence in many countries, which appear rather high relative to those incurred in providing direct protection, services and assistance to refugees.

338. As identified early on in this report, the current proportion of UNHCR's budget invested in the CS function is tiny relative to the expectations placed on it within the agency: to harmonise/coordinate services and ensure access, carry out community mobilisation and development, to promote refugee economic self-reliance, to provide the 'eyes and ears' of protection at the grassroots level, among other things. The approach to budget cutting in many country operations places excessive pressure on the lowest levels of direct services delivery - IPs, and cuts to the meagre wages of refugee workers - with direct consequences for both the attainment of UNHCR's objectives and refugee families/communities.

339. One example of this relates to micro-credit activities undertaken by UNHCR on behalf of refugees. Doubtless, a reasonable level of investment in staff and IP training, enhanced staffing of IPs with appropriate specialists, networking with established micro-credit NGOs, economic/market surveys and follow-up with loan recipients would yield vibrant micro-credit initiatives of economic benefit to both refugees and refugee hosting areas. Yet at current low levels of investment, many

micro-credit activities on behalf of refugees are money sieves, draining the capital, time and efforts required to administer them. They remain a 'good idea', but one in which UNHCR must either make the required investment for success, or put an end to. The status quo is simply too costly to continue.

340. The same logic applies to UNHCR's overall investment in maintaining its field and country operations versus the direct benefits and tangible outcomes for refugee populations. Our analogy would be the cost of keeping a shop open when there are no goods on the shelf. In a context in which many protection, service and assistance initiatives at the delivery point have been cut to the bone, UNHCR, international donors and NGOs must ask themselves if maintaining the operation itself is worth the cost. In the words of one IP spokesperson: "Morally, can we maintain camps when we do not have the adequate resources to look after the refugees in them?"

341. Among other operating costs, UNHCR might look to its transport and logistics sector as one area in which costs appear out of line with the benefits and services accruing to refugees. In many operations, UNHCR maintains a quantity and quality of vehicles for its own use that is well beyond what it would ever consider providing to IPs and their frontline workers who are in daily contact with refugees. The costs and benefits associated with this sector of UNHCR merit an evaluation in their own right, to determine its value in terms of meeting UNHCR's mandate, as well as to explore more cost-effective alternatives (such as the contracting of locally-owned transport services) to the maintenance and management of a sizeable fleet of expensive vehicles.

342. Similar scrutiny could be brought to other areas of UNHCR's operations: the costs of rent paid on premises, the cost of accommodation paid for staff, etc. Before we consider cutting the wages of a refugee woman standing at a grinding mill from morning to night from \$1.00 a day to \$.50 as a cost saving measure, all other costs and their relative contribution towards attainment of UNHCR's mandate should be explored.

343. Among numerous other areas this evaluation has questioned the cost-effectiveness of UNHCR's investment in maintaining a sizeable 'advisory' capacity on Gender and Children versus the alternative of strengthening UNHCR's and IP's CS capacity working directly within field and country operations. A recent development in this direction is the decision by the Bureau for CASWANAME to replace two P4 regional advisors in the Middle East with one Regional Community Services Officer to oversee gender and children's policy implementation. This decision has freed up resources now being used to hire national professional Community Services Officers in three countries in the region. UNHCR senior management should closely follow the situation in CASWANAME to determine the impact of this change on the protection of refugee women and children in the three country operations and the region as a whole.

- **It should be evident or made so to donors that UNHCR's CS capacity has been seriously jeopardised by years of budgetary neglect and staffing cuts. Donors who support UNHCR's policy priorities regarding refugee women and children should be aware that current resource levels to perform the CS function, both in Headquarters and the field, are inadequate to meet the Office's policy objectives. The ability of the Office to develop innovative and responsive protection and assistance measures, grounded in the**

realities of refugee women, men and children, requires enhanced staffing, tools and resources specifically designated to strengthen UNHCR's CS function.

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Appendix 1: Terms of reference

The community services function is a relatively neglected aspect of UNHCR's work, attracting significantly less international attention than many other of the organization's activities. And yet it is a function which seeks to meet some of the most essential needs of refugees and refugee communities, including those who are at greatest physical and psychological risk.

In an attempt to examine the effectiveness of UNHCR's activities in this domain, and in response to a suggestion made by the US government's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration, UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit is commissioning an evaluation of the community services function. The evaluation will be undertaken by a consultancy team or company, to be selected by a process of competitive bidding.

The evaluation is expected to provide a brief historical overview of the development of the community services function in UNHCR, and to address four primary themes: policy, strategy and priorities; operational issues; management and resources; and partnerships. An indicative list of issues falling within each of these themes is appended, and will be used to guide the evaluation team's enquiries.

The evaluation is expected to provide a comprehensive and empirically-supported analysis of UNHCR's community services function, and to make specific and realistic recommendations to UNHCR management. It will also draw attention to examples of good and bad practice that can be incorporated in training activities, guidelines and manuals.

The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the mission statement of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU), as well as UNHCR's evaluation policy. It will therefore involve extensive consultation with refugees and other stakeholders, and adopt an approach which is sensitive to the issues of age, gender and socio-economic differentiation in refugee populations.

The team engaged for this evaluation will have proven experience in the use of participatory evaluation methods. The team will be gender-balanced, bring a multicultural perspective to the project and have some familiarity with UNHCR, refugee situations and the community services function. One or more UNHCR staff members with evaluation and/or community services experience may participate in this review, subject to the agreement of the selected team.

The evaluation will be guided by a Steering Committee consisting of key stakeholders within and outside UNHCR, and chaired by a member of EPAU. The Steering Committee will help to develop the terms of reference for the review, select a consultancy team, monitor the progress of the project and ensure that its findings and recommendations are effectively utilized.

This evaluation will begin in the first quarter of 2002, and will be completed by the end of 2002. The selected consultancy team will undertake interviews and research at UNHCR's Geneva headquarters, and will undertake missions to three or four field locations, to be chosen in association with EPAU. The team is expected to develop an appropriate means of sampling the opinions of UNHCR staff and other stakeholders in countries which are not visited.

The report of this evaluation project will be placed in the public domain. UNHCR will not exercise any editorial control over the report but will provide comments on the draft and will proofread and format the report prior to publication. UNHCR reserves the right to publish a response to the report and to attach it as an annex to the report.

Members of the consultancy team that undertakes the evaluation should feel free to express a range of different viewpoints on issues where they are unable to reach a consensus. The team may be asked to provide an interim and/or final briefing in Geneva on the findings, recommendations and methodology of the evaluation project.

After the completion of the project, the team will be asked to prepare a brief 'lessons learned' report, analyzing the way in which the evaluation was managed and undertaken. This report will be used to enhance UNHCR's evaluation procedures and methods.

Following the completion of the evaluation report, the Division of Operational Support will prepare a management response to the review, explaining how its findings and recommendations will be utilized. The steering committee for the project will also be asked to make recommendations in this respect. The findings and recommendations of the project may be used as a basis for national or regional workshops, briefings to donor states, the Executive Committee and NGOs, and for training purposes.

Indicative list of issues to be addressed by the evaluation

Policy, strategy and priorities

To what extent does the community services function enhance the protection and solutions mandate of UNHCR and what could be done to strengthen this linkage?

Does UNHCR have a clearly-defined community services policy, strategy and priorities?

If so, to what extent are the policy, strategy and priorities appropriate ones? And to what extent are the policy, strategy and priorities known, understood and implemented, by community services staff, by other UNHCR personnel and by the organization's implementing partners?

To what extent is UNHCR's recently-established community development policy understood and implemented at national and regional levels, and what role are

community services personnel playing in that process, including the promotion of self-reliance and socio-economic empowerment?

Operational issues

Which of UNHCR's activities are categorized as 'community services', and is that categorization a rational and effective one?

Are community services activities effectively linked to other components of UNHCR's field operations?

To what extent does the community services function vary from one country programme to another?

In which areas do field offices need/expect HQs support regarding community services work?

How useful are UNHCR's community services manuals, guidelines and management tools, and how successfully have they been disseminated? Do these tools reflect the community development policy recently introduced by UNHCR?

How often is an analysis of the basis for perception of beneficiaries towards services been carried out, so that services are adapted to some of the beneficiaries perceptions?

To what extent are examples of good and bad practice in the community services sector effectively disseminated in the organization and to UNHCR's implementing partners?

Which are the indicators used by offices to measure the impact of community services work?

Management/Resources

Is the community services function provided with adequate human and financial resources? Is it given adequate priority in the planning and programming process?

Are community services staff undertaking appropriate activities? To what extent their time/resources are used at their maximum?

To what extent is their work effectively coordinated with the activities of other UNHCR specialists, including those who work on the issues of gender, children and education?

Is the community services function appropriately located in UNHCR's headquarters and field office structures?

To what extent a professional profile clearly defined for community services staff in-house?

Do community services staff have adequate skills, and do they receive appropriate training, guidance and support? Do community services officers actually have the competencies required of them?

Partnerships

Is the work of those implementing partners adequately monitored, supervised and coordinated?

To what extent have UNHCR's emergency community services stand-by arrangements with NGOs proved effective? And how, if at all, could they be enhanced?

EPAU

February 2002

Appendix 2: A brief history of the CS function in UNHCR

Established as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly⁸⁶ in 1950, UNHCR was intended to extend international protection to the refugees from World War II, and seek solutions primarily through third country resettlement.⁸⁷ The General Assembly authorised the High Commissioner to “*seek funds to provide care and maintenance to, and participate in the financing of permanent solutions for, refugees*” - as well as to seek appropriate solutions for those not within his mandate, or whom political imperatives made it difficult to consider as refugees under his mandate. These new situations generally involved temporary displacements and voluntary repatriation was seen as the ideal outcome.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, cold war driven conflicts supplanted the process of decolonisation and gave rise to massive refugee flows. The global refugee population rose dramatically - from an estimated 3.2 million in 1973 to 10 million in the mid-1980s. At the request of states, UNHCR extended protection and assistance to these groups, and the General Assembly adopted a series of resolutions to this effect. In the absence of solutions to these internal conflicts, refugee situations stagnated and protracted camp situations emerged - with UNHCR extending emergency and temporary care and maintenance aid. In response, social services evolved under the Division of Assistance to attend to a range of needs of refugees in both urban and rural contexts.

UNHCR experienced tremendous growth in the 1980s and 1990s. The annual requirements for funding of UNHCR programmes climbed from \$US 100 million in 1970 to \$US 510 million by 1980. Largely in response to the refugee emergencies in Indochina, the number of UNHCR field offices and staff increased dramatically from some 39 offices in 1973 to 95 in mid-1980. Staff expanded over the period from around 400 to 1500. The role of Social Services expanded, and a review of UNHCR programmes in West Africa (1983-1987) - particularly the counselling projects - revealed the high priority attached to social services in terms of ensuring the protection of refugees.⁸⁸ The second large expansion in UNHCR activities occurred between 1990 and 1993, when expenditure more than doubled, from \$US 564 million to \$US 1.3 billion. This increase is largely attributed to massive repatriation operations in the early 1990s as well as the major relief operations in northern Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. Expenditure subsequently dropped to \$US 887 million in 1998 and then rose to \$US 1 billion in 1999 as a result of the Kosovo crisis.

⁸⁶ Through its Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December.

⁸⁷ Offices were established in a limited number of locations and the budget of UNHCR in 1951 was approximately \$US 300,000. Toward the end of the 1950s, with the decolonisation of Africa and other areas, the focus of UNHCR's activities turned from Europe to the "South".

⁸⁸ (HCRDK/0709/87 April 28, 1987).

Social Services becomes Community Services

By 1985, UNHCR was convinced of the importance of catalysing community development in refugee situations, reinforcing the development approaches in co-operation with hosting governments and the need to link relief aid with long-term development. In the latter half of the 1980s, two rounds of reform were introduced to UNHCR's structure in order to better integrate protection and assistance operations, eliminate "compartmentalized layers" between the High Commissioner and field operations and emphasize responsibility and accountability for the conduct of operations.⁸⁹

Though the reach of Social Services had broadened in the late 1980s, it was undergoing a new transformation. Even as the Social Services function was transferred from Programme Management Services (PMS) to Technical Support Services (TSS) in 1987 - approximately 22 of 43 field positions were classified as social service-related activities.⁹⁰ But facing an uncertain future in 1989, including financial shortfalls and restructuring under-way at Headquarters, UNHCR began to call for an approach that encouraged self-reliance, participatory development, and cost-saving mechanisms that focused on the productive capacities of refugees themselves. Reflecting a renewed interest in "community development," it sought to harness the "community's" capacities and reduce dependency through a more concerted "developmental approach". As part of this shift in strategy, Social Services was renamed Community Services. The name change also served to reinforce the idea of the community as a participant in finding solutions, particularly in the context of protracted⁹¹ refugee situations.

⁸⁹ Exactly four years later, following serious financial cuts in 1989, changes were again undertaken - including the restructuring of headquarters into nine entities, the re-alignment of the evaluation unit, the renaming of the Division of Refugee Law and Doctrine to the Division of International Protection and a streamlining of all programmes. (*IOM/FOM 21/22 21 March 1986; Ad Hoc Review Group Recommendations on the Role and Structure of UNHCR, March 1990*)

⁹⁰ (Memo October 18, 1988).

⁹¹ Protracted situations are becoming the norm, rather than the exception. Some refugee situations have remained unresolved for up to 30 years.

Appendix 3: Common perceptions about the scope and purposes of CS

In order to understand how UNHCR and IP personnel defined the *present* conceptual approach of CS, the CASA team canvassed a wide range of actors across the organisation. These included focus groups carried out with Department of International Protection staff, and the EPAU steering group (June 2002), key informants among UNHCR staff at HQ and in the field, and interviews with Protection officers, community service personnel, implementing partners, government officials, and refugees in five countries.

Predictably, a broad range of interpretations of community services emerged: responses varied from, “I am not sure, but think it might include the provision of “blood banks” (WFP-Nepal) to support for “everything above basic needs” (DIP-Geneva). The Assistant High Commissioner, when asked, noted that it refers to all services to refugees and host communities - and that it constitutes a form of “practical protection”. In the field, views ranged from those assuming community services to be everything – all goods and services-- being provided to refugee camps or “communities”, to others assuming the term to refer to everything provided except direct physical assistance (food, shelter). Some see Community Services as the part of assistance to refugee communities not specifically identified by other sectors within UNHCR (e.g., by protection, education, health, housing, nutrition, etc.)— hence as some kind of residual set of “services. “A number of implementing partners had been allocated or inherited a set of seemingly unrelated programmes which where all budgeted through Sector H, and accepted CS as whatever UNHCR budgets through Sector H.

The term “community” has a very broad range of meanings in everyday language, as well as in the jargon of sociology and anthropology, so that whatever meaning UNHCR may wish to attach to this term is not intuitively obvious to those implementing or benefiting from these UNHCR programs and mandate. The Oxford Dictionary, for instance speaks of a rural community, religious community, the public, society in general, common ownership, participation, community of interests, the district or area where people live, etc. It gives as synonyms citizenry, constituency, denizens, inhabitants, commonality, population, and sameness.

The idea of “services” is similarly ambiguous, evoking the idea for instance of “goods” versus “services”. This would suggest that such refugee “services” as health, education and training, policing, and the like should be the focus of the sector, as compared to the provision of goods such as food, housing, water and sanitation. The term “services” also suggests the provision of something utilitarian; the idea of being of service, or that UNHCR is a “service provider.” That CS represents a set of services stands in contradiction to the idea that it is all about self help and promoting self-reliance, ideas that stand in opposition to being passive recipients of a set of

services or deliverables. That the “promotion” of self-reliance and self-help is a service is not immediately obvious to the recipients of such “services.”

Appendix 4: CS and sexual and gender-based violence

In almost all refugee settings visited, SGBV continues to be a strong part of UNHCR's agenda for social change and enhanced protection of refugees, unaffected by cuts to other forms of activities and assistance.⁹² In many cases CS staff and CS implementing partners are responsible for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of SGBV activities. A review of UNHCR's *Guidelines* and activities in the field related to the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) indicate that overall, the recommended approach to SGBV and materials for training are extremely useful in helping UNCHR to structure appropriate response mechanisms to instances of sexual and gender based violence. It is seen as a strong vehicle for awareness raising and capacity building for all stakeholders-- including staff, IPs, local police and government officials—and for community mobilization and even for bringing perpetrators to justice.

The focus on SGBV has promoted practical opportunities team-building within UNHCR, particularly between the CS and Protection functions in the field, drawing attention to the strong link between the social and legal dimensions of refugee protection. Through regular CS-Protection meetings, workshops including refugee leaders and IPs, the documentation of lessons learned, as well as through the high profile that has been given to this issue, CS and Protection staff in the field have, in some cases, been able to come to a better understanding of the complementary nature of their roles.

- **Community-level information gathering, analysis, mobilization, sensitisation and support activities are essential for bringing incidents of sexual violence to light and developing community-based measures to address them. SGBV provides one of the clearest examples in which gender and age analysis - leading to an overall situation analysis—can inform and provide a coherent basis for programming and protection activities.**

However, a weakness of the SGBV approach, or perhaps merely an oversight, is the lack of emphasis or focus on the whole issue of refugee 'vulnerability' in contexts where basic assistance levels are inadequate.

- **Where refugees are not economically self-sufficient, SGBV training and workshops should never be a substitute for the supply of appropriate and adequate food and other forms of material assistance.**

Perhaps the absence of this oversight is due to the fact that when the SGBV Guidelines were produced, the adequacy of basic material assistance may have been

⁹² Both the recent gender and children's evaluations are critical of the fact that SGBV activities continue to be funded as 'special programs' with earmarked funding from the UN Foundation. However, it should be noted that in the present financial crisis of UNHCR, it is actually a safeguard that these activities cannot be cut.

taken-for-granted. The SGBV *Guidelines* briefly mention the appropriateness and fair distribution of assistance under Preventive Measures.⁹³ However, in the present context of cutbacks, the Guidelines do not go nearly far enough in articulating the full range of causes of sexual and gender-based violence, and the role that the provision of appropriate assistance and services, or the lack thereof, can play in exacerbating the sexual exploitation of women and girls.

The UNHCR response to 'the West Africa scandal' and the case of Guinea, to highly publicised cases of sexual exploitation in return for food, non-food items or cash has resulted in increased SGBV training and sensitisation, without corresponding efforts to increase food assistance or income generating activities for individuals at risk of such sexual exploitation⁹⁴. In Meheba settlement in Zambia, strenuous competition for scholarships and spaces in secondary school has become a basis for sexual exploitation. Refugees there accused male teachers and headmasters of exploiting their positions and power, by offering female students enhanced chances at secondary school scholarships, in exchange for sex. While we do not have adequate data on the frequency of such cases, sexual and all other forms of exploitation, along with bribery and corruption, appear to be the frequent outcome of poorly planned and monitored assistance measures in resource-poor environments.

Rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, trafficking of women and girls, issues related to bride price and early marriage, and sexual exploitation are all considered under the rubric of SGBV. All have different causes and consequences, depending on the refugee setting, and require a range of different approaches to address them in any meaningful way.

- **CS staff require better support and models to understand the range of different opportunities and approaches for working with refugee populations to address the broad range of very different social phenomena that are currently grouped under the rubric of SGBV.**
- **All CS staff should be provided with an encouraged to familiarise themselves with the 'How To' Guides on Reproductive Health that usefully document the experiences and lessons learned by different country operations in addressing a variety of problems related to SGBV.**

Finally, with the strong emphasis on SGBV within the Office, there is actually a danger that general refugee exploitation come to be seen only as 'sexual exploitation', when in reality, men, women, boys and girls are all vulnerable to exploitation of many kinds when fundamental problems faced by refugees go unmonitored and untreated. In the Burma border area of Thailand, as in parts of Africa, while we note that while women may be likely to be sexually assaulted or raped while foraging for food, engaging in trade or collecting firewood, men are also highly vulnerable to beatings, extortion and a range of other abuses while attempting to meet basic needs.

⁹³ UNHCR. Sexual Violence against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response, p. 16-17.

⁹⁴ Sexual and gender-based violence: Lessons learnt from West Africa, unofficial draft document for Headquarters discussions, July 2002.

- **SGBV activities should be seen by UNHCR as an entry point to understanding the different forms of violence that affect both genders, and all age groups.**
- **SGBV programming is best carried out in tandem with other measures to combat the pre-conditions that intensify sexual exploitation.**
- **The rise in social problems like sexual and gender-based violence should be not only be viewed as direct problems to be addressed jointly by CS and Protection staff, but also as a key indicator of a potential inadequacy of the care and maintenance regime. Appropriate responses should then be developed to deal with the underlying conditions and causes that precipitate high levels of violence against women.**

Appendix 5: Micro credit strategies - lessons learned from the Grameen Bank

- **Key lessons from the Grameen Bank and other successful micro-credit models reinforce the following principles for successful and sustainable revolving loan funds, that should be duly considered by UNHCR staff and IPs in developing and implementing micro-credit activities on behalf of refugees:**

Grameen Bank: Lessons Learned

Small Loans: Successful programmes offer small loans (usually less than \$100) in the beginning. Larger loans are given later after the women have developed the skills, discipline and commitment needed for success

Primarily Women: Successful programmes make loans mostly to women, who are much more committed to using their loans for the benefit of their families, and generally have a stronger commitment to repay their loans in order to qualify for larger loans in the future.

Groups of Five: Successful programmes insist that the women be organized into groups of five, with each person in the group committing to guarantee the loan payment of the other members in the group.

Weekly Payments: Successful programmes insist that payments be made on a weekly basis, thus helping to build discipline and consistency. Weekly payments on small loans over a period of 52 weeks also ensure that the payments required each week are small enough, that if one person in the group could not pay in a given week, the others would be able to make the payment for her.

Lower Poor: Successful programmes provide loans only to the poorer groups. These women have no other alternatives, so they are much more committed to repaying their loans.

Required Savings: Successful programmes require all borrowers to put some amount of money into a savings account each week that will earn interest. Establishing these savings accounts appears to strengthen the borrowers commitment to the programme, but also helps to build their sense of discipline, self-esteem, and well-being.

Interest Charged: Successful programmes charge an appropriate level of interest, usually higher than what a bank might charge, but much less than what a money lender would charge: this is generally between 2-3 percent per month, just enough to pay salaries of the bank workers supervising the programme in their area.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Banking Business: Successful programmes generally hire people with a business or banking background to be village bank workers and the programme is perceived to be a banking programme, pure and simple, in which the borrowers are clients, not beneficiaries.

High Commitment to Training: Successful programmes develop a strong commitment to meet with the people every week on a regular schedule, to give training in literacy, health, and community development, in addition to training in accounting, marketing and entrepreneurial skills.

Source: James B. Mayfield in *Choice Humanitarian*, Fall 1998, pp.2.

Appendix 6: Situation analysis as a central tool for UNHCR and its CS function

UNHCR already has at its disposal some excellent materials and approaches that should be adapted to form the basis for a field-generated, protection-oriented country operations plan. One of the potentially most important and least utilized is the Situation Analysis tool that forms a part of the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) Training of Trainers and tool-kit.

The ARC Situation Analysis tool provides an important extension to the People Oriented Planning (POP) training and framework that has reached numerous UNHCR staff. While the POP helps to raise staff awareness of the importance of the social dimension in assisting refugees, it does not go far enough in providing all functions the common framework and tools to do so. The POP framework appears to be oriented towards staff developing a 'social analysis' of the refugee population related to each staff's own function or technical sector. However, it does not give staff from a wide variety of backgrounds, adequate skills, methods and tools for ensuring a systematic, participatory and unified framework as a basis for overall planning.

According to the ARC toolkit: "Situation analysis is the process of assessing a complex situation within its wider context, systematically gathering information, identifying the main problems and needs within a refugee population, identifying the principal resources contained within that population, and analysing the information gathered in order to facilitate the process of planning in a systematic, strategic, integrated and co-ordinated manner".

While the orientation of the ARC tool-kit is primarily towards enhancing child-centred analysis and protection, its module on Situation Analysis is general enough to be easily adaptable for use with refugee populations as a whole, provided particularly that steps are taken to ensure that gender issues and analysis are more fully reflected.

- **To be appropriate for general use, the Situation Analysis as presented in ARC also requires some adaptation to ensure that situation analysis carried out by offices includes special needs groups such as the elderly and disabled, as well as a strong component related to economic variables, including food security, and opportunities and constraints related to refugee economic self-sufficiency.**

In addition to defining the general characteristics of Situation Analysis and its protection-oriented objectives in refugee settings, the ARC module also introduces a number of key research techniques and methods to form the basis for systematic on-going analysis of the refugee context. These include observation and interviewing techniques, as well as survey and participatory assessment methods essential for deriving accurate and credible information from and about refugees.

- **All CS staff, but particularly CSOs, should be familiar with the range of survey and participatory techniques and methods required for facilitating a process of situation analysis on part of the country operations.**
- **The CS Unit in Headquarters should coordinate the production of a guide for staff on how to carry out the full range of social and economic analysis that should form part of an overall situation analysis. Staff of the DIP, RLSS, the Gender and Children's units, as well as IPs, should all be participants in the development of such a guide.**

The ARC module also includes a brief but relevant discussion of Ethical Analysis. In the context of increasing numbers of refugees and decreasing resources to ensure their protection, UNHCR staff recognise that they need to be able to set priorities – for staff time and financial allocations – more effectively.

- **They also need to be able to defend field-based priorities in the face of arbitrary actions and impositions from higher levels within the Office.**
- **At the same time, the setting of strategic priorities invariably implies extremely difficult choices about what and how to cut when cuts are required. All UNHCR staff functions, as well as partners, need to be involved and committed to engaging in a challenging process of priority setting for maximum refugee protection, based on the realities of each field setting.**

If adopted and applied seriously, a Situation Analysis Framework and Exercise (SAFE) would provide UNHCR offices with the knowledge base through which to build internal and external consensus (vis-à-vis refugees, IPs, host governments and donors) about the use of resources for meeting key protection priorities. It would also lead to the identification and publicising of those protection issues and priorities that are beyond UNHCR's present means to address, but require additional support from international donors and/or host governments.⁹⁵

- **UNHCR should be much more pro-active in alerting donors to the range of protection needs that currently fall beyond the means of country operations to address. Situation analysis should be linked to a process of needs-based budgeting that allocates resources first to the most pressing protection problems, but also identifies the range of protection concerns/issues for which resources are not currently in place to address.**

Based on the findings of this, and other recent evaluations, we find that systematic and routine situation analysis to be a cost-effective approach to the urgent need for better and more relevant planning and monitoring of field and country operations. Such a process is central to ensuring the long-term credibility of UNHCR as lead

⁹⁵ According to the 2002 Children's Evaluation: "Situation analysis leads to response based on urgency, political and other opportunities and resources, but all risks are identified and acknowledged. Priorities and possible solutions would be determined by and rooted in the refugee community. For example, if separated children or sexual violence were identified as the most urgent concerns, one could understand a delay in addressing child labour. UNHCR might not have the resources to address child labour or detention, for example, but would advocate for action by appropriate government and other actors and seek to monitor such risks for refugee children through relevant local organisations". p.67.

agency and coordinator of refugee operations, and for ensuring common priorities and approaches are agreed to by all relevant actors.

- **Ultimately, situation analysis must lead to a strategic planning exercise, in protection, CS, programme and field staff, as well as refugees, IPs, and host governments would be involved in setting key protection priorities, in line with UNHCR's mandate in the area of refugee protection and durable solutions.**
- **The strategic plan must be justified in terms of the key protection priorities identified at both the community and country level. All actors would also identify their specific roles and resources for enhancing refugee protection - along with timelines for achieving specific objections. It could be expected that such a process would eventually replace - or become the basis for - the Country Operations Plan, and that its achievements be reported in the annual protection report.**

The SAFE would utilise participatory processes and techniques to involve all actors, both internal to and external to UNHCR offices, in order to build consensus and ensure direct participation of refugees in the planning and monitoring process, in line with various UNHCR's policies, most recently the CD policy.

- **The results of the SAFE must be shared - it does not only 'belong' to UNHCR but to all participants in the process. This is the best way to build a common sense of 'ownership' by refugees, IPs and host governments, also in line with UNHCR's CD policy.**

Who is responsible for situation analysis and how often?

As a central tool for determination of needs, resources, opportunities and priorities of the local/country refugee operation, ensuring that situation analysis and related strategic planning is appropriately resourced and carried out is ultimately the responsibility of UNHCR management in country operations and Headquarters.

- **This includes ensuring that all country operations have access to appropriately trained and qualified staff are available to ensure the inclusivity and validity of the process.**

According to the ARC Situation Analysis module, "Everyone involved with the refugee situation has a potential role to play in situation analysis. CS Officers in UNHCR sometimes play a co-ordinating and facilitating role, but it is vital that all sectors contribute to it."

The situation analysis, if rightly implemented is a team process, and a team-building process urgently needed by UNHCR at this time. It is a key step towards operationalising a Community Development Approach, by creating a regular process of analysis and programme review that includes all actors (all UNHCR, as well as refugees, IPs, host government representatives) and across technical sectors based on field-based realities and opportunities.

Professional CS staff with social science backgrounds and training in social and participatory research techniques are best placed to facilitate situation analysis on

behalf of the Office. Further, the rationale for situation analysis is directly related to that of the CS function itself: to ensure that all groups and segments of the refugee population have access to appropriate protection, assistance and services.

- **According to the evaluators, the ability to conceptualise, facilitate and train others to carry out an inclusive process of situation analysis in refugee settings is the KEY COMPETENCY required of national or international CS Officers.**

This is not to say that the numerous country operations where no CS Officers are present should not undertake situation analysis. On the contrary, it is all the more important for these country operations to have access to support in conceptualising, planning and carrying out this exercise. It would be hoped that such an important community-based activity would help offices to recognise their need for experienced CS Officers, either a longer term or more punctual basis, and to advocate for the support they require.

- **In the absence of appropriately qualified and experienced CS Officers, staff the Programme, Protection or Field functions, or an appropriately qualified IP, should be assigned the responsibility of facilitating a process of situation analysis.**
- **All country operations should have access to support from experienced CS Officers, on a short term or as-needed basis, to orient and train non-CS staff - staff of the Field, Protection and Programme functions - to ensure their capacity to do situation analysis.**

We find that while UNHCR focuses a great deal on 'critical moments' and transitions in refugee operations, some of the greatest protection challenges arise within the most stable and protracted refugee situations. In the absence of durable solutions, social tensions and inequalities often lead to major protection problems.

- **Depending on the refugee context, an annual process of situation analysis would permit UNHCR to have up-to-date information on emerging trends within the refugee population, and form a solid basis for programme and protection monitoring, adjustment, and self-evaluation.⁹⁶**

⁹⁶ According to the ARC Situation Analysis module: "Situation analysis should be seen as an on-going process...Frequently planning has to take place in the absence of complete information, especially at the early stages of an emergency, but the process should start at the beginning of an emergency...Situation analysis will be particularly important at various strategic stages: for example: towards the end of the emergency phase; when large-scale repatriation is being considered; when there is a new influx of refugees or major programme changes; when it becomes clear that refugees are likely to spend an extended period of time in the camp." The evaluators would recommend that situation analysis be carried out even more frequently, as the basis for an annual process of review, priority setting and budgeting.

From Action for the Rights of Children :
key concepts in situation analysis

A child-centred situation analysis requires a good understanding of how children's experiences are likely to impact on their development, and how various aspects of life in a refugee situation will facilitate or impede development.

An understanding of the socio-cultural background of the refugees, and of the host society, is required.

Situation analysis requires an appraisal of refugee capacities and resources as well as problems and needs. Refugees need to be seen as resilient survivors, not hopeless victims. The refugees themselves are the principal resource.

A situation analysis also has to assess other existing and potential resources, their capacities and limitations – e.g. local NGOs, government agencies, UN organisations, religious organisations etc. It is important to recognise gaps and limitations and to acknowledge needs that cannot be met within the short term.

The capacity of existing resources to work in a co-ordinated way so as to achieve maximum efficiency, coverage and impact should also be part of a situation analysis.

The task should be undertaken in a systematic manner. Although it is not always feasible to gather complete and accurate information, a systematic approach will help to minimise the dangers associated with bias.

Situation analysis should be conducted in as highly participatory a manner as is possible, involving refugees themselves, including children and adolescents whenever possible.

Both quantitative and qualitative information will be required. These will involve different tools and techniques.

Situation analysis must take account of the long-term needs of children and adolescents. This inevitably involves an element of forecasting, predicting political changes, anticipating particular durable solutions, etc. In turn this requires an analysis of the wider political situation within the region.

Source: Action for the Rights of Children: Situation Analysis Module, p.3-4

Appendix 7: Community services and senior level staff questionnaires



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COMMUNITY SERVICES EVALUATION

Community Services Staff Questionnaire Form

CASA Consulting has been engaged by UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) to carry out an independent evaluation of UNHCR's Community Services function. The evaluation will examine the overall effectiveness, relevance and impact of the Community Services function, and consider how these could be improved. The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist the Community Services evaluation team to better understand the conditions of employment, areas of activity, responsibilities and opinions of UNHCR's Community Services staff about their working environment. *We thank you for your collaboration in completing this questionnaire and your active participation in this evaluation.*

This questionnaire, which is likely to take about **60 minutes** of your time, is to be completed by current CS staff. These may be staff persons who are regular employees of UNHCR, JPOs, contractual, seconded or project staff working in the area of Community Services on behalf of UNHCR. Senior Community Services Officers, Community Services Officers, Associate or Assistant Community Services Officers, or any other Community Services staff are included in this survey.

All responses will be kept **strictly confidential**, and will be shared only among members of the evaluation team. Your responses will help create a composite picture of the working conditions, areas of responsibility, challenges, successes and opinions of UNHCR's CS staff, and will not be shared with UNHCR in any manner that would permit individual respondents to be identified. For further information about the evaluation process or this questionnaire, please contact Virginia Thomas at csevaluation@aei.ca.

Instructions:

1. The questionnaire may be completed in **English** or in **French**.
2. Please type your answers into the spaces provided after each question, supplying a one-word answer, a sentence, paragraph or more, as you see fit.
3. Press '**Tab**' to move from one reply to another. **Click** the mouse to insert the cursor where you wish to type. Place cursor and **click** on boxes to select your preferred response.
4. You can edit or change your answers at any time. Please be sure to **save** this file, so that your answers will not accidentally be lost.
5. If you have any questions or problems answering this questionnaire, please contact Virginia Thomas by telephone at (450) 672 4800 or by e-mail at csevaluation@aei.ca. The completed questionnaire should be sent as a **file attachment**, prior to **May 31, 2002** by e-mail to csevaluation@aei.ca

1. Background Information	
1a. <i>Name (optional):</i>	
1b. <i>Telephone and e-mail:</i>	
1c. <i>Current Job Title:</i>	
1d. <i>Country/Field Office:</i>	
1e. <i>Size of Office (total UNHCR staff):</i>	
1f. <i>Total number of CS staff in your office:</i>	
1g. <i>Personal grade:</i>	
1h. <i>Grade of your post:</i>	
1i. <i>Post grade and job title of your direct supervisor:</i>	
1j. <i>Age:</i>	
1k. <i>Sex:</i>	Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/>
1l. <i>Nationality:</i>	

1m. **Terms of employment with UNCHR:** Please indicate which of the following describes the terms of your employment with UNHCR.

- Regular UNHCR staff (indefinite contract)
- Junior Professional Officer (JPO)
- Emergency stand-by CS staff
- UN Volunteer (Please specify under what terms and conditions, duration of contract)
- Seconded staff (Please specify from what organization, under what conditions and duration of secondment)
- Project staff (Please specify under what project, conditions and duration of contract)
- Consultant (Please specify under what terms, conditions and duration of contract)
- Other (Please specify)

1n. Please check one of the following:

National staff

International staff

1o. **Educational Background:** *Please give the highest degree/diploma you have obtained, the year of graduation and field of study: for example, B.A. 1992, Sociology*

1p. *How long have you been working for UNHCR and in what capacities? (support staff, Community Services, Programme, Protection, etc. please list all, giving years in each role)*

2. Preparation for Job as Community Services Staff

2a. *Briefly describe what policies, guidelines, training or briefings you received when you were first hired as CS staff.*

2b. *Of these, what was useful to you? What was less useful?*

3. Relevance of Current Policies and Guidelines

3a. *Since you were hired as CS staff, what **new** policies, guidelines and training have you received (e.g. on Refugee Children, Urban Refugees, Community Development, etc.)?*

3b. *Of these, what was useful to you in your work?*

3c. *Of these, what was less useful to you in your work?*

3d. *In what areas, if any, do you feel that you would benefit from further training?*

4. Responsibilities of Community Services Staff

4a. *For what sectors, programmes or areas of activity do you have specific responsibilities? (Please explain)*

4b. *For what sectors/areas are you the designated Focal Point within your office? For example gender, refugee children, health, reproductive health, sexual and gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS awareness, education, environment or others? (Please specify)*

4c. *What does this designation (of 'focal point') imply for your work?*

4d. *Do you have a role in programming, policy- and decision-making within the office? Do you feel this role is appropriate? (Please explain)*

4e. *Do you have a specific budget that you manage (if so how much)?*

4f. *How and how often do you have direct contact with members of the refugee communities? Do you feel this level of contact is adequate?*

4g. *Do you have adequate population information, age/gender analysis and other resources to identify and assist "vulnerable" groups and individuals? (Please elaborate)*

4h. *What is your role in the supervision and monitoring of Implementing Partners, and how effectively do you feel you are able to complete this role?*

4i. *Given the local refugee context, do you feel UNHCR is using appropriate Implementing Partners for Community Services? (If you have had any particularly positive or negative experiences in working with IPs please explain)*

5. Priorities of Community Services Staff: Please take a moment to reflect on the range of activities and tasks you typically carry out as CS staff.

5a. *Given the local refugee context, which activities and tasks do you consider most important?*

5b. *Are there activities that take a large part of your time that you feel contribute little to the overall performance and effectiveness of Community Services? (Please explain)*

5c. *Based on the refugee context in which you are working, what qualities and skills should a Community Services staff have to effectively carry out this role?*

5d. *What indicators or methods do you use to measure the effectiveness of Community Services programmes and activities for which you are responsible? Are these appropriate? (Please explain)*

6. Support for CS staff in the working environment

6a. *What kinds of support or assistance are currently provided to you by colleagues at different levels within UNHCR? Do you receive adequate support and assistance to achieve your objectives as CS staff? (Please indicate all that apply to the situation in which you are working, and provide details and comments).*

	Types of support/assistance provided	Support/assistance adequate?	
From UNHCR staff Field Office(s)	Specify:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
From UNHCR staff in Branch Office(s)	Specify:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
From UNHCR staff in Regional Office(s) or Service Centres	Specify:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
From UNHCR staff in Headquarters	Specify:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other relevant actors such as Implementing Partners, local authorities, etc. (please specify)	Specify:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

6b. *What additional support, assistance or coordination is needed? (Please explain)*

7. What have been the greatest challenges to you in work as CS staff? (Please give examples)

8. What have been your greatest successes in your work as CS staff? (Please give examples)

9. Opinion Section**Agree****Disagree**

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements, and below each statement make any **comments** about the reasons for your answer.

9a. The role of Community Services staff should ideally be filled by a person trained in an individual case management or casework approach.

Comment:

9b. Community Services promote 'social protection', and should be treated as an essential part of UNHCR's protection mandate.

Comment:

9c. The main job of Community Services should be to implement the community development policy.

Comment:

9d. With more specialists within UNHCR to promote the mainstreaming of issues such as those related to refugee women and children, the need for CS staff is much reduced.

Comment:

9e. Implementing the community development policy should not be the job of CS staff, but of all staff.

Comment:

9f. Because of their training and responsibilities, the Community Services staff should be the main interface with and spokesperson on behalf of refugees.

Comment:

9g. All staff should be knowledgeable about the needs and circumstances of refugees, and should not relegate this important task to one or a cadre of staff, such as the Community Services staff.

Comment:

9h. It is difficult or nearly impossible to recruit appropriately trained Community Services staff from within UNHCR.

Comment:

9i. Gender and Children's specialists provide strong support to community services staff and activities in the field.

Agree

Disagree

Comment:

9j. The main reason we need Community Services staff is for monitoring of programme implementation by our Implementing Partners.

Comment:

9k. We should recruit more men for Community Services positions.

Comment:

10. Are there any other comments that you would like to make? (Optional)

Thank you for your participation. Please save the questionnaire, and send it as an attachment to csevaluation@aei.ca along with the executive summary of your most recent and available country program (or similar summary document on your local refugee context).



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COMMUNITY SERVICES EVALUATION

UNHCR Senior-Level Staff Opinion Survey

CASA Consulting has been engaged by UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) to carry out an independent evaluation of UNHCR's Community Services function. The evaluation will examine the overall effectiveness, relevance and impact of the Community Services function, and consider how these could be improved. This questionnaire will assist the evaluation team to better understand the views of UNHCR's senior-level staff about the role of Community Services personnel and the implementation of Community Services programmes. *We thank you for your collaboration in completing this questionnaire.*

This questionnaire which is likely to take about 40-60 minutes of your time, is to be completed by senior-level staff persons familiar with issues related to Community Services (e.g. Deputy Representative, Senior Programme Officer, Senior Protection Officer, Senior Operation Coordinator, Head of Sub Office, Head of Field Office, etc.) Although it is about Community Services, it is **not** to be completed by Community Services staff, whose opinion is being solicited in a separate survey.

For further information about the evaluation process or this questionnaire, please contact Janni Jansen or Virginia Thomas at csevaluation@aei.ca. All responses will be held in strictest confidentiality, and mainly used to obtain a broad cross-section of opinion.

Instructions:

1. The questionnaire may be completed in **English** or in **French**.
2. Please type your answers into the spaces provided after each question, supplying a one-word answer, a sentence, or paragraph, as you see fit.
3. Press '**Tab**' to move from one reply to another. **Click** the mouse to insert the cursor where you wish to type. Place your cursor and **click** on boxes to select your preferred response.
4. You can edit or change your answers at any time. Please be sure to **save** this file, so that your answers will not accidentally be lost.
5. If you have any questions or problems answering this questionnaire, please contact Janni Jansen by telephone at (514) 598 5751 or by e-mail at csevaluation@aei.ca. The completed questionnaire should be sent as a **file attachment**, **prior to May 31, 2002** by e-mail to csevaluation@aei.ca.

1. **Respondent Background**

- 1a This questionnaire is to be filled out by senior-level staff familiar with issues related to Community Services. This should **not** be the Community Services officer, who will be asked to fill out a different questionnaire.

Please indicate your name, telephone number, staff position. (e.g. Representative or Deputy Representative, Sr. Programme Officer, Sr. Protection Officer, etc.) and the number of years you have been in this position and your field/ country office.

Name (optional):

Telephone and e-mail:

Staff Position:

Years in this position:

Field/Country Office:

Size of Office/Total number of Staff:

- 1b *What is your age, gender, and number of years of service with UNHCR?*
- 1c *Please indicate your main professional training/background (e.g., international law, economics, ecologist).*

2. **Refugee Context**

Briefly describe the refugee context of concern to your field office (e.g., types of refugees of concern, number and size of camps or settlements, months in existence, main ethnicity of refugees).

3. **Role and Responsibilities of Community Services**

- 3a *Whether or not you have any CS staff, are you aware of the prescribed role and responsibilities of such a staff person? Please briefly outline what you think these are?*
- 3b *If you have no community services personnel, who/what type of staff person(s) carries out these responsibilities in your office? Is this appropriate and effective? Why or why not?*
- 3c. *Does the office have a separate Community Services budget?*
- 3d *If there is a separate budget, approximately how much is it in US dollars? What percentage is it of the total operational budget?*
- 3e **Does a CS staff person mainly manage this budget? If not, by whom is it managed?**
- 3f. *Do you have special programs for vulnerable groups? For which vulnerable groups?*
- 3g *How are vulnerable individuals, families and groups identified?*

- 3h *Who in your office is designated to be a focal point for issues of gender, children, education, health, mental health, sexual and gender-based violence, income-generation and self-reliance? Please elaborate.*
- 3i *How do you measure, monitor and evaluate the impacts of Community Services programmes and activities?*
4. **Community Development Policy**
- 4a *Are you knowledgeable about UNHCR's Community Development Policy?*
- 4b *Does your office have a strategy to implement the policy? Give any examples of activities to implement the Community Development Policy.*
- 4c *Do you receive adequate support from Headquarters to implement the Community Development Policy?*
- 4d *What support is provided? What additional support is needed?*
5. **Implementing Partners**
- 5a *What implementing partners do you work with for provision of Community Services? Please list.*
- 5b *Does/do these implementing partner(s) understand and respect the UNHCR guidelines for Community Services. Elaborate.*
- 5c *Does/do these implementing partner(s) have their own objectives and guidelines different from those of UNHCR? If so, are these ever in conflict? Please elaborate.*
- 5d *Given the local refugee context, is UNHCR using appropriate Implementing Partners for Community Services?*
6. **Community Services Staff**
- 6a **Basic Information on CS staff:** *Please provide the number of CS staff you have in each category with their age and gender, post level, and whether they are national or international staff.*
- Regular UNHCR staff:*
- Junior Professional Officer (JPO):*
- Emergency Stand-by CS Staff:*
- UN Volunteer*
- Project staff*
- Consultant*

Other (*Please specify*)

- 6b *To whom does/do Community Services staff report? (e.g. to what grade/post of staff)*
- 6c *What are the main activities carried out by your Community Services Staff?*
- 6d *What are the main training/educational background and skills of your CS staff?*
- 6e *In your opinion, should CS staff ideally have different training or skills? Explain.*
- 6f *Again, in your opinion, are the time and resources of the CS staff being optimally used?*
- 6g *Should the number of CS staff be increased? Be cut back? Why?*
- 6h *Has your office now, or ever used stand-by Community Services staff during an emergency? Was this effective? Why or why not?*
- 6i *How long did the stand-by staff person remain, what was their function, and was this an appropriate way of handling Community Services tasks?*
- 6j *Has your office ever hired Community Services staff as project staff? What is the disadvantage or advantage of this approach?*

7. **Opinion Section** **Agree** **Disagree**

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements, and below each statement make any **comments** about the reasons for your answer.

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7a | <i>The role of Community Services staff should ideally be filled by a person trained in an individual case management or casework approach.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7b | <i>Community Services promote 'social protection', and should be treated as an essential part of UNHCR's protection mandate.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7c | <i>The main job of Community Services should be to implement the community development policy.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7d | <i>With more specialists within UNHCR to promote the mainstreaming of issues such as those related to refugee women and children, the need for CS staff is much reduced</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7e | <i>Implementing the community development policy should not be the job of CS staff, but of all staff.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

APPENDIX 7

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7f | <i>Because of their training and responsibility, the Community Services staff should be the main interface with and spokesperson on behalf of refugees.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7g | <i>All staff should be knowledgeable about the needs and circumstances of refugees, and should not relegate this important task to one or a cadre of staff, such as the Community Services staff.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7h | <i>It is difficult or nearly impossible to recruit appropriately trained Community Services staff from within UNHCR.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7i | <i>Gender and Children's specialists provide strong support to community services staff and activities in the field</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7j | <i>The main reason we need Community Services staff is for monitoring of programme implementation by our Implementing Partners.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7k | <i>We should recruit more men for Community Services positions.</i>
Comment: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Thank you for your participation. Please save the questionnaire, and send it as an attachment to csevaluation@aei.ca.

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Appendix 9: Abbreviations

ARC	Action for the Rights of the Children
CASA	Community Action Services Alliance
CDA	Community Development Approach (UNHCR)
COPS	Country Operations Plans (UNHCR)
CORD	Christian Outreach Relief and Development
CS	Community Services (UNHCR)
CSO	Community Services Officer
DIP	Department of International Protection (UNHCR)
DOS	Division of Operational Support (UNHCR)
EPAU	Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (UNHCR)
ESA	Emergency Stand-by Arrangement (UNHCR-Save the Children)
EVI	Extremely Vulnerable Individual (UNHCR)
HCDS	Health and Community Development Section (UNHCR)
HQ	Headquarters (UNHCR)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGA	Income generating activities
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IP	Implementing Partners (UNHCR)
OP	Operational Partners (UNHCR)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
POP	People-Oriented Planning (UNHCR)
RLSS	Reintegration and Local Settlement Section (UNHCR)
SC	Save the Children
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRS	Self-Reliance Strategy (UNHCR Uganda)
UAMs	Unaccompanied Minors
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
WFP	World Food Programme

Appendix 10: Lessons learned from the evaluation process

Prepared by CASA Consulting – January 2003

We appreciate the opportunity to share some of our lessons-learned and reflections on the CS evaluation process and products. We hope these remarks may help in some small way to enhance the effectiveness of the overall evaluation mechanism and procedures within UNHCR.

UNHCR is a complex organisation trying to fulfil a complex mandate. This evaluation has been rewarding in that it prompted us to reflect on many aspects and dimensions of UNHCR's work, and the relationship among all its functions. To understand, conceptualise and articulate the precise role and place of the CS function in terms of UNHCR's mandate has been very challenging. We hope that we have been able to stimulate new thinking on a number of issues, and to help the Office to view others in a new light. We are very aware that many areas could have been explored in greater depth than the time and level of effort afforded to this evaluation has permitted, and hope such exploration and thinking continues well beyond the current exercise.

1. Who is the audience?

A question we found rather difficult to come to terms with has been that of the audience for this evaluation. On the one hand, many of the issues raised in the evaluation related directly to the work of CS staff worldwide, to their personal level of skill and effectiveness or lack thereof. However, we also realise that to a very great extent, the weakness of CS, and in some cases the poor performance of its staff, can only partially be addressed or corrected from within the CS function itself. We have frequently heard criticisms of a very personal nature: 'this one lacks vision' or 'that one does not have good leadership skills'. However, given the highly limited hiring in the area of CS and very small cadre of its staff, it has been a challenge to articulate systemic problems and issues without publicly targeting the individual incumbents of various CS positions and posts. From the earliest point in our evaluation, only one Community Services officer had an accurate idea of how small – in terms of staff and budgets – the CS had actually become.

In the final analysis, our message has been primarily directed to senior management within UNHCR, in an effort to persuade that the CS function within UNHCR has reached a critical point past which, without a strong financial and intellectual investment in CS as a core function of the Office, there is hardly any point in continuing with it at all. The status quo of having some poorly defined and conceptualised function that attempts, or is expected to be all things to all people, is simply untenable. This is ultimately not a problem that the CS function, with its extremely limited staff and capacities, can address for or by itself. Someone in UNHCR's senior management must, ultimately, be convinced and motivated to take

up the thorny conceptual and practical issues raised by this and other recent evaluations, and to make the hard decisions that are required and outlined. Without this, we fear that our efforts and UNHCR's investment in this process will have been of little consequence.

2. What should the CS function be?

While we may be faulted for not providing a definite solution in terms of defining what the CS function 'should be', we also consider that such an answer is largely beyond the terms of reference for this evaluation. Typically, an evaluation, through its various methods, attempts to measure outcomes and impacts related to a set of specific pre-defined objectives of an intervention, programme or set of programmes. For instance the Gender and Children's evaluations started from the rather advantageous position of having a clearly defined policy/guidelines, upon which to measure operational issues and those of 'compliance'. In the case of CS, we found the conceptualisation of the 'function' and its role vis-à-vis other function to be exceedingly unclear. Simply trying to identify those commonly understood/agreed upon objectives required a great deal of time and reflection on the part of team members. The range of institutional beliefs about the objectives of CS has varied from CS is everything, to CS is somehow irrelevant, to everything in between. There has existed no clearly defined model, or even competing set of models, that would indicate a unified set of measures permitting us to say whether the CS function is ultimately meeting the Office's pre-defined objectives or not.

This is perhaps one of the limitations of undertaking such a broad 'thematic' or 'functional' evaluation, where the function itself is poorly conceptualised and defined. It might lead EPAU to consider the relative merits of carrying out an 'evaluation' *per se* of such functions. At many points in this process, we felt what was actually being hoped for, expected, or even required was something more like an advocacy piece on behalf of CS than an evaluation. While some might fault us for being 'too negative' in our assessment, we have tried to walk a fine line between documenting the objective weakness of this function, while affirming its crucial importance and role within the Office. However, the question remains in our mind as to whether it is altogether fair to use the modality of evaluation in a context where a function has been so thoroughly weakened and starved of intellectual and financial resources by senior management of the Office. This raises the question of the strategic implications of evaluations carried out by EPAU, which is a rather thorny issue in itself but one that we hope EPAU will reflect on in planning such broad 'functional' evaluations.

In the absence of a clearly defined set of objectives for the CS function, we have struggled to try to give some leads. Ultimately, as we hope has been clear from the final report of this evaluation, we see the CS function could/should be defined largely as an analytical and coordination one: to coordinate the gathering and analysis of socio-economic data with and about the refugee population that will help ensure appropriate targeting and design of UNHCR's field based activities, and as a basis for advocacy within and outside UNHCR on behalf of refugee populations and their grassroots protection needs. We consider this a radical departure from the status quo, and one that would require significant changes in the staffing level and profile of CS staff. Again, we may be criticised for a lack of realism or for being too

utopic about the possibility for re-orienting/re-structuring UNHCR's operations and activities, but if as external and independent critics we do not take the opportunity to advocate for a radically different or alternative approach, then who will?

3. Are our recommendations 'realistic' enough?

We have struggled a great deal with the item in our TORs that requests us to provide 'realistic' recommendations, while trying to give shape to a somewhat different vision of the CS function can and should do on behalf of the Office. Realistically, organisations always prefer the status quo, or something very close to it. However, at times within our team, we have confronted the problem of whether to take a rather stark or radical stance, or whether to recommend a number of small or intermediate changes to CS approaches and activities that would essentially leave the status quo intact.

In Thailand for instance, two team members who carried out the field mission agreed on all the observations, findings and data gathered. However, they disagreed about the implications of the worsening conditions for Burmese refugees in Thailand for the delivery (or not) of CS. One team member felt it most crucial to emphasize that 'tinkering' with CS activities on behalf of EVIs was not a relevant role for UNHCR in the general context of systemic and longstanding obstacles imposed by the Thai government; rather than 'play along' this team member felt that a much stronger and coherent message (such as the withdrawal of UNHCR altogether) should be sent by UNHCR, indicating that it cannot compromise on fundamental issues/requirements for ensuring refugee protection. The other team member felt that UNHCR must continue to support the Thai government and other local actors in efforts to improve the local situation for EVIs and other refugees.

Disagreement, where it existed, was over the interpretation of what should be the relationship between the host government and UNHCR; the role of CS in relation to overall UNHCR policies and operations; the extent to which UNHCR can and should find compromises with host governments in order to ensure its continued presence in a given country; and finally our role as evaluators in fundamentally questioning the general conditions under which CS programming represents a viable and value-added contribution on the part of UNHCR, and where more radical measures are needed. While the voicing of two perspectives is treated as somehow 'unscientific' by ROTH, we feel that on the contrary, both views represent dimensions of a more fundamental questioning that is often alien, or at least highly suspect, within UNHCR. Given the broad scope of this evaluation and the range of backgrounds and perspectives of our consultants, it is surprising that we did not have more numerous instances of serious divergence of opinion and interpretation.

4. Range of issues and agendas

It has been a challenge to evaluation team to try to accommodate the range of issues and agendas that stakeholders have, quite legitimately, tried to project onto this evaluation of the CS function within UNHCR. While we have greatly appreciated the immense interest and active participation of staff in this evaluation, we have often felt caught between multiple expectations of what would be the product,

especially given the limited time and level of effort afforded to the evaluation process. We would like to explore only two examples:

Country operations

Country operations, that generously received and facilitated our field missions naturally would have liked to receive detailed assessments and recommendations for enhancing their specific field operations. In many cases, and to the largest extent possible, we have tried to provide ideas and recommendations that would be helpful to strengthening the CS function and operational activities in countries visited. However, given the limited level of effort afforded to this evaluation, and as a consequence the brevity of our field missions, we were not able to carry out the detailed review of every country operation that would have been required to provide each with a coherent set of specific local solutions. During the course of field missions, we always attempted to clarify for staff that our primary focus was to draw out themes, issues, trends and data relevant to an overall assessment of the CS function within UNHCR. However, we fear that many country operations may have felt that their expectations of our mission, as an opportunity to sort out site-specific problems, were unmet. Nepal is a case in point, with BO and SO sending 19 pages of comments attempting to deflect criticism about local operations and querying the lack of direct recommendations from CASA about CS in the Nepal camps.

Many country operations visited viewed the evaluation with some degree of suspicion or anxiety. While such an attitude is understandable, the result is often that the real or deeper issues and problems facing country operations are rarely spoken of openly or candidly at the outset of the field mission. Initial briefings, particularly with higher UNHCR officials were rarely opportunities for a candid exchange of information on problems or issues facing their operations. Rather, many of the real challenges remained hidden at initial briefings, rendering the exercise less than fully useful, and more like something of a formality or social call. This pattern sets up a type of cat-and-mouse scenario for the evaluators, with friendly but often misleading briefings, and unnecessarily conflictive or defensive debriefings upon our return from the field with much more detailed information. On a few occasions in the context of field visits, lower level staff would raise issues of great importance and urgency, and state very candidly – “this is what we are doing, and these are the problems we are facing in doing it. What do you think?” Such an attitude on the part of staff is much appreciated by the evaluators, as it helps us move faster from simply identifying the deeper problems, to working together with staff to explore possible solutions.

In one of the field missions, we had a very cordial meeting with the Representative prior to going to the field. When we asked him what his problems or concerns were with respect to the refugee settlement, he said that the main problem was that of inadequate access to primary education for refugee children. Maybe we could help by looking specifically at this problem. However, when we arrived in the field, we realised that the problems were much broader, including that of an IP in charge of providing education and CS that was not trustworthy in the eyes of the refugees, other IPs or UNHCR staff. The ‘education’ problem was not isolated but linked to much deeper and more systemic problems, of which the Representative was fully aware, but omitted to mention.

Overall, we felt that many country operations were inadequately informed about the nature of our field missions (although all received our Terms of Reference, this was clearly not adequate to help them understand the limitations on what we could accomplish in each site visited in the time allocated). They did not understand the limited scope of our missions, as case examples on which we could draw broader agency-wide conclusions, rather than a definitive evaluation of all their local activities. They have tended to have high expectations for country-specific recommendations, but often without a corresponding openness to a joint learning process that the evaluation could have provided. We feel that EPAU should undertake to promote with country operations the importance of evaluation to enhancing their own effectiveness (as well as that of the Office as a whole), and offer more information, technical support and encouragement to those country operations willing to invest and participate in developing their own local and regular evaluation activities. It has proven well beyond the scope, time and level of effort afforded to this evaluation to meet the range of expectations and evaluation needs of so many country operations.

Units in headquarters

The CS evaluation has been shaped and influenced by numerous units in Headquarters, as well as prior evaluations carried out of the Policy on Refugee Women and the Policy and Guidelines on Refugee Children. In large part this has been very positive and beneficial: the two prior and closely related evaluations helped us to define and reflect on the commonalities and differences in our field observations and the interpretation of evaluation findings. To some extent, we have considered our evaluation as one in a 'cycle' of evaluations that, from the point of view of senior management, should be seen as closely related. We feel that EPAU could develop what may have been a chance occurrence into something more planned and systematic, based on the principle that "the 'truth' is always somewhere in the middle". Any evaluation will bring close attention to a limited number of aspects of UNHCR's work, and neglect others. There is a risk that any one of these evaluations, taken on its own, could lead to a somewhat distorted image of overall organisational performance and put pressure on senior management to take up one course of action over another, without being in a position to consider the consequences in a holistic manner. We have pointed out several key divergences between our analysis and conclusions and those of the prior evaluations, leaving it for UNHCR to select the best course of action.

At the same time, we have been concerned with frequent requests from UNHCR staff for the evaluation to provide an answer to the question 'where will the resources come from?' While this is clearly a pressing question and at the request of staff we attempted to provide a few ideas in our final version of the main report, we feel that this is well beyond the scope of this or any other recently carried out evaluation. It requires serious analysis and reflection on the part of senior management as to the relative costs and benefits provided to refugees by all sectors and functions of the Office. To provide meaningful guidance on this question would require the evaluators to have an even broader overview than we currently have of the value-added, in terms of meeting UNHCR's mandate, of all functions and costs. Based on our experience, this is a crucial question for UNHCR to be asking from within. Our only real advice would be to closely examine the direct benefits to refugees accruing

from each function relative to the costs incurred. Strangely enough, in such a calculation, we believe that the CS function would likely come out as one of the stronger performers.

Finally, the area of refugee economic self-reliance, as conceptualised and articulated primarily by RLSS, is a vast and complex field that we could not address in the depth that we would have liked in the context of this evaluation. It comprises numerous technical areas (IGA, micro-finance, employment creation, skills and vocational training, to name but a few) that are well beyond the experience and level of specialization of most UNHCR staff – CS or not. While CS is most often the point of delivery for many of the activities carried out in this area, the problems experienced in defining and promoting refugee self-reliance involve the whole orientation of UNHCR and its country operations, and the level of effort UNHCR can and should assign to becoming more ‘development’ oriented.

UNHCR as an organisation tends to pride itself on its primarily generalist staff – with an attitude that ‘we should all be able to do everything’. While this is generally a positive attitude that can help break down rigid distinctions between UNHCR’s functions, it can also lead to professional frustrations, failure and/or at worst, a type of arrogance that belittles specialized technical expertise that is urgently required. To upgrade UNHCR’s capacity to achieve a reasonable level of success in the area of economic self-reliance would require a sizeable financial and intellectual commitment on the part of UNHCR that has yet to be demonstrated, and is currently well beyond its capacity (and perhaps even its mandate?). While we are aware that there is some interest in doing a think-piece on ‘social protection’, we feel that an even more pressing need might be to do some serious policy analysis (not an evaluation) on the concepts and practices currently employed in the area of refugee economic self-reliance, with an eye to assessing the practical implications for UNHCR of pursuing self-reliance strategies in a meaningful way, rather than having these become an additional drain on UNHCR’s scarce human and financial resources.

5. CS evaluation steering committee

We have greatly appreciated the time and attention of our Steering Committee in meeting and discussing with us a broad range of issues and suggestions related to this evaluation, as well as their helpful comments and recommendations for improving the final report. We have found EPAU’s use of the Steering Committee, before and during the evaluation to be a great support to the evaluators in permitting us to get deeper insight into the views, perspectives and experience of UNHCR staff. Yet we consider that the most critical role for our Steering Committee begins now, in the aftermath of the report. We greatly hope that the CS Evaluation Steering Committee will continue to meet, to duly consider our conclusions and recommendations, to join forces with those involved in the prior Women’s and Children’s evaluations, and to hash out the thorny conceptual and resource issues that need to be drawn into a plan of action.

6. Contracting methods and payment arrangements

The long delays in arriving at a satisfactory contract at the outset of this project were unfortunate, but the implementation of this evaluation has shown that our initial concerns around the wording and format of our contract were not frivolous. The issues raised by us at that time are already on record, but we feel that EPAU should try to get a better understanding with SMS that the provision of an evaluation product is very different from the delivery of material inputs or the provision of direct services to clients. As it was determined by EPAU, and well reflected in its recently published Evaluation Policy, that this and other evaluations should be highly consultative, participatory and, to the greatest extent possible, interactive processes, much more flexibility needs to be built into future contracting arrangements.

We appreciate that under current funding constraints, UNHCR has been doing its best to try to impose financial control and save money on this evaluation where possible. However, this evaluation has already placed very heavy demands on our time and resources, and we have found it an added administrative and management burden to be requested by UNHCR, without prior discussion, to provide more and different types of information in order to receive payment. UNHCR should be aware that it also plays a role in adding (rather than subtracting) time from this evaluation by providing new reporting formats that should have been discussed and provided to the consultants at the outset of the contract. Given the amount of work involved, and the many changes made along the way, we are relieved to have arrived within the budget provided by UNHCR for this evaluation.