UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
EVALUATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS UNIT

# Organizing participatory self-evaluations at UNHCR

*Guidelines*

By EPAU

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**Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit**

UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) is committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects and practices. EPAU also promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR and encourages an active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policymakers and the research community. All of these activities are undertaken with the purpose of strengthening UNHCR's operational effectiveness, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to fulfil its mandate on behalf of refugees and other displaced people. The work of the unit is guided by the principles of transparency, independence, consultation, relevance and integrity.

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*"UNHCR is committed to the principle of participation by consulting refugees on decisions that affect their lives."*

UNHCR mission statement

*"The primary purpose of UNHCR's evaluation function is to provide UNHCR managers, staff and partner organizations with useful information, analysis and recommendations, thereby enabling the organization to engage in effective policymaking, planning, programming and implementation."*

UNHCR's evaluation policy

# Introduction

An organization that can learn and change on the basis of systematic examination and in conjunction with its stakeholders is likely to be a healthy and effective one. As such, UNHCR is committed to developing an effective evaluation function, and to consulting refugees on decisions that affect their lives. The participatory self-evaluation (PSE) technique is one means of combining these objectives.

This handbook contains a set of draft guidelines intended to help UNHCR staff design and implement PSEs. PSEs can take many different forms; as such, the contents of this publication raise issues and present options, but are not intended to serve as a blueprint for all PSE exercises. This handbook is in draft format, and is undergoing field-testing before finalization. Users of this guide are encouraged to submit comments to the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) at hqep00@unhcr.org

These guidelines have been derived from existing literature (in particular World Bank/Carleton University International Programme for Development Evaluation Training 2002, *Core Materials*, and UNHCR PCOS/DOS, *Participatory planning in UNHCR: A practical guide*, 2002), UNHCR planning documents, EPAU's experiences with self-evaluation, and inputs from the Programme Coordination and Operational Support (PCOS) section. These guidelines were recently reviewed and revised.

Work started on this handbook in 2002 under Jeff Crisp, then Head of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. Since then, many people have participated in the compilation of these guilelines, too many to mention, but all have made a valuable contribution for which we are very grateful.

# Participatory self-evaluation: definition and objectives

**What is a participatory self-evaluation?**

1. UNHCR defines participatory self-evaluation (PSE) as a structured event at which agencies, refugees, hosts and governments jointly assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of an operation, programme or project in order to enable learning, change and mutual accountability. While there is no standard PSE model, they all share these premises. This guide expands on these common principles, but does not prescribe a single model to follow.

*What are the objectives of a PSE?*

2. PSEs have multiple objectives, many of which apply to evaluations in general; chief among them are:

- to derive lessons from experience, and enable UNHCR to more effectively discharge its protection and solutions mandate;
- through involving a wide selection of stakeholders, to enable UNHCR to take a broader, less UNHCR-centric view of a programme;
- to provide stakeholders, especially refugees, with an opportunity to present their perceptions and assessments of UNHCR's activities;
- to encourage team-building and build commitment to implementing any recommended corrective actions;
- to build stakeholder capacity for analysis and problem-solving;
- to reinforce UNHCR's accountability to refugees, partner organizations and the Executive Committee;
- to document UNHCR's experiences and enable the collection material from which to measure future performance, and to retain institutional memory;
- to foster a transparent, inquisitive and self-critical culture.

*What are the differences between PSEs and conventional evaluations?*

3. PSEs and conventional evaluations share the same basic goal; to enable improved performance through systematic analysis and assessment. There are, however, differences in emphases and methods. Simply put, conventional evaluations are undertaken by persons not involved in programme implementation, and stress both learning and accountability. PSEs, on the other hand, are undertaken by those directly involved with the programme, and emphasize learning and team-building.

*What experience does UNHCR have with self-evaluations?*

4. UNHCR has undertaken three pilot PSEs – one in Ethiopia (2000) and two in Central Europe (2001 and 2003). They were structured differently, but shared a similar emphasis on stimulating refugee participation. Details of both exercises are provided later in this document.

5. Neither self-evaluation nor participation are new ideas at UNHCR. Self-evaluation, in the sense of having an office (but not necessarily other stakeholders) take stock of a programme, has been used before. And participatory planning is being used more and more at UNHCR, notably owing to the efforts of PCOS. EPAU has also experimented with a beneficiary-based evaluation technique, using an anthropological approach to ascertain intended beneficiary viewpoints. The PSE approach is novel in that it takes the self-evaluation concept and expands it to include strong stakeholder participation.

*What is the current UNHCR policy on participatory self-evaluations?*

6. As an organization, UNHCR is "committed to the principle of participation by consulting refugees on decisions that affect their lives" (UNHCR mission statement). UNHCR is also committed to becoming an organization that learns, changes and renders itself accountable through evaluation. As PSEs are a means of attaining both objectives, the EPAU has prepared these guidelines, and is available to facilitate at least two PSE exercises each year.

SOME DEFINITIONS

**Evaluation**
*"The analysis and assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of the organization's policies, programmes, practices, partnerships and procedures, focusing on their planning, design, implementation and impact."*

(UNHCR)

**Self-evaluation**
*"An evaluation by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of a development intervention."*

(OECD/DAC)

**Participatory evaluation**
*"Evaluation method in which representatives of agencies and stakeholders (including beneficiaries) work together in designing, carrying out and interpreting an evaluation."*

(OECD/DAC)

# First steps: deciding to self-evaluate

**Why conduct a participatory self-evaluation?**

7. A PSE is conducted by, and for the primary benefit of, those directly involved in a given humanitarian operation. It is self-initiated; as such, it can be implemented by any dedicated office or department – there is no need to be told to evaluate. If you are considering a PSE, you should first reflect on:

- what questions you want the PSE to answer, and whether they are best addressed through a PSE format, or through other means (internal reviews, independent evaluations, audits);
- what outputs you expect from the PSE, and how you intend to use them;
- what stage or juncture the programme is at;
- what the evaluation's scope should be – camp, sub-office, country programme, operation, region.

**Formulating evaluation questions**

8. The first step in the evaluation process is to focus it by deciding on the questions to ask. Good questions are clear, focused and relevant, and make sense to others. In deciding on questions, you need to consider several factors:

- what is the main need the programme is attempting to address?
- what stakeholders are involved in the PSE process, and what are they most interested in knowing?
- how will the results be used?
- which, among the many possible questions, are of greatest importance?

9. There are three major types of evaluation questions: descriptive, normative and outcome/impact (see box). Outcome/impact questions can yield some of the most valuable information regarding the effectiveness of a programme, but are usually the hardest to answer. Descriptive questions are easier to answer, but are more typically the subject of regular UNHCR monitoring and reporting. PSEs will vary, but a likely model might focus on normative questions, anticipate outcome and impact questions, and use data from descriptive questions obtained during previous monitoring activities to help in the search for answers.

## TYPES OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS: EXAMPLES

The first step in an evaluation planning process is deciding on which questions to ask. Good questions are clear, focused and relevant, and make sense to others. There are three main types of evaluation questions: descriptive, normative and outcome/impact.

### DESCRIPTIVE – WHAT IS

Such questions seek to provide a snapshot of what is, and ask: who, what, where, when, how, how much? Some examples of descriptive questions include:

- *Who benefits from the programme?*
- *What are the characteristics of the programme?*
- *How do the participants feel about the programme?*
- *How much did the programme cost?*

### NORMATIVE – WHAT SHOULD BE

These questions look at what is and compare it to what should be. They ask whether what we are supposed to be doing, and whether we are hitting our target. Some examples of normative questions include:

- *Was the planned voluntary repatriation of 60,000 refugees undertaken in line with UNHCR's guidelines on voluntary repatriation?*
- *Were newly arrived refugees provided with 15 litres/water/person, as per minimum emergency standards?*
- *Is the country of origin information web site established and functioning?*

### OUTCOME/IMPACT – WHAT DIFFERENCE THE INTERVENTION MAKES

This type of question attempts to measure what has changed as a result of the intervention. Outcomes and impacts are similar, but outcomes refers to more immediate changes, while impacts refer to longer term changes. Some examples of outcome/impact questions include:

- *Has Ruristan's accession to the 1951 Convention resulted in the termination of its practice of summary refoulement?*
- *Have UNHCR human rights training programmes for the local police resulted in a decrease in abuses perpetrated against refugees?*
- *Has the distribution of wooden beams for shelters resulted in a decrease in deforestation?*

**What outcomes do you expect from the exercise, and how will you use them?**

10. As with all evaluations, a PSE should yield information that is credible and useful, and that enables learning and change. In addition, the PSE process, in which a diverse group of stakeholders is gathered in one setting to reflect on issues on an equal footing, is of itself a valuable outcome. In planning a PSE, you should be aware of the various outcomes, and act to maximize the opportunities for capturing and utilizing them.

11. For example, if you expect to break new ground by bringing together a varied group, how will you ensure that any momentum created and links forged will be maintained? If you are working on a programme revision, you must ensure that participants are aware of what revisions have been agreed upon, preferably by being given a copy of any revised plans before the PSE is over.

12. Building in a utilization focus from the start is the key to a successful PSE: so doing will leave you with solid and practical outputs, while not doing so may dissipate energies and undermine expectations.

**Programme stage or juncture**

13. While working on the evaluation questions, you also have to consider the stage your programme is at. If the programme is new, you will be dealing with formative and normative issues (are we doing the right thing, and are we doing it in the right way), whereas if the programme has been in existence for some time, you may be able to examine outcomes and impacts. Stages when a PSE would be relevant (or not) include:

- Change of UNHCR Representative: holding a PSE at this point would help the new management to understand the programme, and gather information needed to make any necessary adjustments;
- Change in durable solution prospects: if new local integration or voluntary repatriation opportunities emerge (or disappear), it may be opportune to assess the relevance of current policies;
- Protracted refugee situations: if both the situation and UNHCR responses to it are at a stagnant point, a PSE could help to refocus energies in the development of innovative new polices, and in building ownership;
- Hand-over: if the programme has arrived at a point where UNHCR is trying to hand over a residual caseload to development actors, a PSE could serve as a forum whereby the different stakeholders (relief and development agencies, host government and refugees) can air their concerns and views on the way forward;
- An emergency situation: conditions are not likely to favour a PSE;
- A programme characterized by strained relationships amongst UNHCR, the government and/or refugees: convening a PSE under very tense conditions could be counter-productive.

**What is the scope of the PSE?**

14. A PSE can deal with an operational area covered by a single sub-office, or it could look at a situation covering several countries. Although it is possible to assess a whole region using the PSE approach, in general it is more suited to smaller situations, either sub-office or country level.

# Groundwork: preparing to self-evaluate

15. By going through the preceding questions and issues, you will have determined (or not) the need and relevance of a PSE to your particular operation. If you decide that a PSE would be appropriate, you need to begin planning for it. Proper and sustained planning is essential – given the number and diversity of actors involved, the consequences of mounting a poorly organized PSE will be wide-ranging, and could end up placing the office in a worse position than before the PSE.

16. The key steps in organizing a PSE are marshalling your resources, making the practical arrangements and priming the participants.

**Marshalling resources**

17. The principal resources that need to be in place for a PSE are funds, people, information and time.

18. FUNDS – PSEs are designed to be less expensive than external, conventional evaluations. Although EPAU has some limited funds available for PSEs, the initiating offices should expect to cover most of the costs. Below are some typical items that you may have to account for in your budgeting:

- external facilitator;
- venue;
- participant travel and DSA;
- materials/stationery;
- translation;
- refreshments;
- social event.

19. PEOPLE – It is essential to have at least one person within the office designated as a focal point for the exercise. If the self-evaluation involves a country office, this person is typically the Deputy Representative or the Senior Programme Officer. He or she should allocate at least one working day per week, for some eight weeks, to the PSE.

20. In addition to the focal point, you will need one or two facilitators. If you have the budget, you might consider using one facilitator who is not a member of the country office. Such a person may be another UNHCR staff member (from headquarters, for example), an international consultant or a locally available resource person (university staff member, consultant, government official or refugee). EPAU

has the capacity to provide design and facilitation assistance for a limited number of PSEs per year.

21. At a minimum, the facilitator should be on hand to help run the PSE; in other cases, you may wish to involve the facilitator in designing and planning the PSE, and in working on follow-up activities. Terms of reference should be prepared for any external facilitator, including those coming from headquarters.

22. Other persons that may need to be involved in the organization of a PSE include:

- Desk Officer: although the PSE should be a field-initiated exercise, headquarters should be aware of it, and will form an important element of the audience for any findings and recommendations. Having a Desk Officer participate in the PSE can be a valuable means of familiarizing Headquarters with a given operation;

- Stakeholder focal points: designated focal points from the different stakeholder groups should be kept abreast of developments, and be given opportunities to provide inputs on practical details and substance.

23. INFORMATION – What documents and other sources are there to help you with the PSE? There will usually be some standard ones, such as the COPs, annual protection reports, SPMRs and sitreps. You may also be able to find other sources, including evaluations, inspection reports, audits, documents prepared by other agencies and other reports. The UNHCR focal point should review this material, and decide which ones are relevant for the exercise, and should be provided to participants. Depending on participant expertise and the level of confidence that exists amongst the stakeholders, you may wish to share programme details. This can promote transparency, accountability, and build trust. It may, however, lead to unrealistic expectations, or may be needlessly complex for the audience at hand.

24. One model for a PSE is to precede it with a conventional evaluation. Ideally, an evaluation team would have just completed their research in the country, and would have a draft report to present to the PSE. This could then become an active document: a springboard for making sense of the past, and formulating a plan of action for the future.

25. TIME – To be done properly, a PSE requires a substantial time commitment, especially for the preparation phase. Past experience indicates that an office should allow at least three months to plan, execute and follow through with the exercise. Remember that you are also making demands on the time of your stakeholders.

**Making practical arrangements**

26. Resolving practicalities surrounding a PSE may sound mundane, but they do tend to occupy a lot of time, and are essential to the successful functioning of a PSE. Some important areas include setting a date, arranging a venue, preparing materials and sending invitations.

27. TIMING – The following are some considerations to be borne in mind when choosing a date – you will have to decide which ones are merely inconvenient, and which ones would seriously undermine the exercise:

- are the major stakeholders available?
- will the PSE coincide with a busy time of the year (e.g. harvest)?
- will it coincide with a major holiday period (e.g. Independence Day, Ramadan)?
- is it possible to schedule it at a time when accommodation rates are lower?
- will the results fit into the planning cycle?
- are other missions and meetings scheduled for the same period?
- could the weather (extreme heat, or rainy season flooding) make it difficult to convene the PSE?

28. VENUE – As with any such event, you will need a venue that is spacious, comfortable and practical. If the PSE is being held in a capital city, there will probably be a range of sites (hotels or conference facilities) that you are aware of and may have used for other exercises. In the "deep field", your options will be more limited and you may have to compromise. Some considerations include the following.

- where possible, the event should be residential;
- the venue should be sufficiently distant from participants' offices that they cannot easily travel back-and-forth;
- "break-out" rooms equipped with flip-charts should be available for small-group work;
- furniture should be movable to enable different groups to be formed;
- the main meeting room should not be used for other functions in the evening (so that materials taped to walls can remain there overnight);
- clean toilet facilities nearby;
- facilities for breaks and lunches should be on-site;
- if there is not a reliable energy supply, organizers should not depend on electrical appliances, including air conditioning, fans, lights, photocopy machines, computers, etc.; and
- there should be space and facilities available to arrange a social event.

***TIP*** **Arrangements at the venue should be inspected the night before the beginning of the workshop**

29. INVITATIONS – Issue invitations at least a month in advance at a minimum; the invitations should indicate PSE objectives, and provide an agenda.

30. MATERIALS – Materials you might need include the following:

- easels for flip charts;
- flip chart paper (a two-day workshop can easily consume over 100 such sheets);
- masking tape (not Sellotape which often does not adhere to walls, or cumbersome packaging tape) ;
- Post-it notes ;
- thick marker pens (black and blue for main text, red and green to "flag");
- name badges (sticky labels work as well);
- overhead projector/laptop plus projector (if needed);
- notepads and pens for participants;
- plenty of printing paper;
- heavy-duty office equipment – hole-punches, staplers, scissors, rulers.

**Participation**

31. Getting the right mix of participants is key to the success of a PSE. The number of persons that can be involved is limited, and yet you have to try to ensure that the various stakeholders are represented at the appropriate level, and that they have the ability to contribute to a lively and constructive discussion. Given that many participants, in particular the refugees, may not be familiar with workshop formats, it is necessary to invest time in explaining the process, obtaining initial inputs and selecting representative participants *before* the formal PSE workshop begins (see box on managing refugee participation).

32. While there is no single formula, a PSE should typically include some or all of the following: refugees, government officials, NGO partners, donors, UNHCR. There should be no more than 25 participants per session – if more will be participating, you will need to think of segmenting the process.

***TIP*** **Use social events (breaks, lunches and receptions) to put people at ease and encourage mixing.**

## MANAGING REFUGEE PARTICIPATION

In order to ensure meaningful and representative refugee participation, it is essential to invest time and resources in meeting with them to discuss the process, capture their thoughts on the direction of the PSE, and begin to select refugee representatives. This can be effected by either dedicated field staff, or the external facilitator during pre-workshop visits. Some elements that would need to be covered at this point include:

- presenting the concept of the PSE, including evaluation questions, and provide refugee groups with opportunities to respond and provide inputs;
- discussing with refugee leaders the choice of refugee representatives for the consultation stage;
- ensuring a mix of gender, age, socio-economic class, ethnicity;
- arranging for separate consultation if they won't/can't speak up in front of other stakeholders;
- considering one or more women-only forum(s) as part of the exercise;
- deciding how many refugees will be needed for them to be properly heard.

Properly managed, the addition of refugee participants to an UNHCR PSE event can enrich proceedings by providing a much needed "reality check". However, there are some pitfalls and problem areas. These include:

### Language

It can be tempting to select refugees who are fluent in English/French, but doing so will not ensure representativeness. Choosing representative refugees, who may not speak English or French, would necessitate the use of interpreters, which can add to costs and time.

### Idiom

Even when language issues are overcome, refugees and other outsiders may find that UNHCR staff members tend to lapse into an impenetrable, acronym-heavy idiom. When the use of jargon is unavoidable, care should be taken to spell out and explain unfamiliar terms.

### Norms

Refugees may be unacquainted with UNHCR norms of interaction and intervention. Care should be taken to brief them beforehand on some ground rules, and to allow space during the workshop for the refugees to provide their inputs.

***TIP*** **"If stakeholders and others who have been successfully identified and brought into representative institutions are then not seriously consulted or see no return on discussions, it may have been better not to have started the process at all." (Apthorpe, 6/00)**

# Action: conducting a participatory self-evaluation workshop

33. The PSE workshop should be designed so that the evaluation questions you have set can be addressed while at the same time ensuring that new alliances are forged, refugee voices are heard and accountability is enhanced. There are a number of ways to do this; this section provides generic elements and models.

34. Your choice of organization and content should be determined by the programme in question, and the emphasis you wish to give to the broad and interlinked objectives of a PSE, namely:

- improvement and change through joint analysis;
- team-building involving diverse stakeholders;
- increased accountability to refugees and others.

35. The first objective, which involves analysis, debate and the formulation of forward-looking plans and approaches, is normally the backbone of any self-evaluation exercise, and the tangible record of it having taken place. At the same time, the activities undertaken during the PSE can yield equally important results, in terms of team-building and accountability. A cunningly designed workshop will aim to maximize both the tangible and the intangible benefits that can accrue from a PSE.

36. Owing to the variety of refugee situations UNHCR works in, PSEs will take on different forms according to circumstances. The important thing is to ensure that discussions are relevant, participatory and constructive, and that outputs (team formation and action planning) are positive and useful. This section describes some generic elements, that will be common to most exercises, and then sketches the highlights from two different models used recently in UNHCR.

**Generic workshop elements**

37. OPENING – It is important to set the right tone at the start. The meeting should be opened (briefly) by senior stakeholder representatives. After that, the facilitators should outline the objectives of the meeting, and run through the ground rules. Care should be taken at this stage to ensure that external stakeholders are comfortable and familiar with the agenda and rules. After the introduction, an ice-breaker exercise should be organized to enable participants to get to know each other.

38. SMALL GROUPS – Much of the outputs for such a workshop will emerge from the small-group sessions. The facilitators should initially determine the composition of these groups, making sure that they are well-balanced in terms of organization, function and seniority. While group membership should normally be changed daily,

in some cases it may be more useful to keep well-functioning groups together for the duration of the workshop. Flip charts and break-out rooms (or spaces) should be available, and each group should designate someone to write-up and/or present findings in plenary.

39. ORGANIZERS – It is the job of the organizers (facilitator(s), office focal point, Desk Officer and others, as applicable) to ensure that the event runs smoothly. The facilitators will lead plenary discussions, ensuring that items are presented properly and concisely, that discussions are lively but structured, and that times are adhered to. Rapporteurs will take notes on proceedings, making use of the small-group flip-charts to supplement them where appropriate. The organizers should convene during breaks, and in the evening, to compare notes and discuss any adjustments that might need to be made to the event.

40. SPECIAL ROLES – You may want various participants to make brief presentations on topics of interest. For example, a refugee may wish to talk about the impact of various programmes from her perspective, or a government official may wish to say a few words on local integration. Such interventions should be planned in advance, and should last for no longer than 20 minutes.

41. SOCIAL EVENTS – Coffee breaks, lunches and receptions are important networking and ice-breaking fora which allow participants to interact in an informal setting. All PSEs should have them, and participants should be discouraged from making alternative arrangements.

42. REPORTING – The organizing office is ultimately responsible for producing a report and action plan from the PSE. It is recommended that an interim report be drafted during the evening of the penultimate workshop day and presented back to participants for their comments and endorsement.

**The Ethiopia model**

43. The following model was used for a PSE conducted in Ethiopia in 2000.

44. A few weeks before the workshop, UNHCR facilitators (one internal, one external) prepared refugees for the workshop through meeting with small groups of refugee women, men and youth, in or near the camp. The role of UNHCR national staff was critical, as most interviews and focus groups were conducted in local languages.

45. All stakeholders participated in a two-day feedback workshop at a central site. "What's going well" and "what's not going well" exercises were undertaken, followed by constructing problem trees and success trees (to look for causes of both). The workshop ended by emerging with a synthesis of recommendations.

46. The facilitators met with implementing partners alone (no donors, no refugees, no government officials) for a day to review the process.

47. Facilitators and UNHCR staff met alone for two days to draw up a plan of action.

**The Central Europe model**

48. In 2001, the Central Europe, Baltic States and Cyprus (CEBS/C) region initiated a PSE in order to refine the purpose of taking a regional approach, and to elaborate a plan of the action for the next year. With 12 countries involved, one of the main challenges was to ensure that the voices and opinions of stakeholders from all the countries were heard.

49. To achieve this, the 12 offices held separate mini-PSEs in their countries, recorded stakeholder opinions, and then brought them to a central meeting in Budapest. While not ideal, this method had the merit of compiling a large number of views while limiting the number of participants at the main event.

50. Subsequently, in 2003, the region held another PSE that built upon the momentum created during the 2001 exercise, and that included limited refugee and NGO participation.

# Next steps: making the PSE count

51. As these guidelines suggest, to be truly effective the expected outputs and outcomes of a PSE should be considered in advance. If the initial steps have been covered, it should be easy to insert PSE outputs into other processes, such as COP drafting, strategic planning and other activities.

52. The following are a few tips that will enable the PSE results to have a greater and more sustained impact.

**Concrete outputs**

53. Make sure that participants do not leave empty-handed. The different note-takers should ensure that clear, concise and action-oriented summaries of the various sections are written up, reproduced and submitted to participants before the end of the workshop. While difficult and time-consuming (work on this may have to be done until late at night), it is essential for both consensus-building and momentum that participants are able to see the first results and future steps before they disperse. The report should be reviewed during the workshop, and a revised version should be sent to participants and others within a week of the end of the workshop.

**Targeted dissemination of conclusions**

54. Once the report has been finalized, it should be sent to a carefully chosen target audience. The targets will vary according to the PSE in question, but will include – in addition to participants – relevant officers from the Bureau in question, and may involve selected host government officials, NGO partners and donors. The reports should be "pre-digested" before dispatch; i.e., the main points of relevance to the addressee should be highlighted in the covering letter or e-mail.

**Maintenance of contacts**

55. One of the objectives of a PSE is to create a wider team. Links forged during the event should be maintained. Non-UNHCR personnel involved in the PSE can serve as UNHCR focal points and allies, be it in a host government ministry or a refugee camp. Contacts can be maintained by circulating relevant documents to these stakeholders, consulting them on decisions that concern them, and meeting with them on a periodic basis.

**Follow-up PSE**

56. Reconvening a PSE one to two years after the initial one can be a good idea. It gathers a group already familiar with each other, and can be used to take stock of progress achieved since the last PSE, discuss prospects for a programme reorientation and reinforce or expand the existing team.

# Annex 1 Sample PSE exercises: toolbox

The following list gives some examples of exercises that the PSE facilitator should be familiar with and prepared to use during the event. They can be used on their own, or in combination.

- What is going well? – getting started;
- What is not going well? – setting priorities;
- SWOC analysis;
- Performance analysis – reviewing UNHCR objectives;
- Cost effectiveness;
- Proposal ranking;
- Action planning.

Use these exercises creatively to fit the people and the situation. They can:

- break down barriers;
- stimulate fresh thinking;
- get different types of participants working together;
- get to realities of the current situation, not just impressions;
- get conclusions properly recorded for later use.

**What is working well? – getting started (30–40 minutes)**

Start the consultation meeting on a positive note. Familiarize participants with using wall cards.

- Explain the use of wall cards;
- Each person writes on the cards something positive about their refugee camp/ refugee life (set aside an area of wall for cards to be put up);
- Facilitator groups cards and recapitulates to the group;
- Brief discussion.

**What is not working well? – setting priorities (45–60 minutes)**

Identifies failings and priorities for the self-evaluation, and helps set agenda for rest of the workshop.

- Fix one sheet per heading around walls;
- Ask each person to write on cards what is not working well;
- Fix cards under relevant heading, (no limit on cards per person);
- Facilitator regroups cards, moves any wrongly placed;
- Facilitator leads a discussion to summarize areas where most concern is focused;
- Agree 5–6 priorities with the whole group for further exploration.

**SWOC analysis (1.5 hours, 2 hours with feedback)**

Focuses on priorities from "What is not going well" exercise.

- Explain "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Constraints";
- Let meeting divide into mixed groups according to interests;
- Group exercise:
  - take one priority area per group and chart up SWOCs;
  - each group fills one flipchart sheet with a SWOC square "box";
  - put results on walls for later inspection, e.g. over lunch, orfeedback to whole group.

**Developing opportunities (optional follow-on to SWOC) (1.5 hours)**

Groups re-examine their SWOC results.

- Using Opportunities box only, groups generate – What Who When – for making the opportunities identified a reality;
- Feedback to whole group;
- Discussion.

**Performance analysis – reviewing UNHCR objectives (1.5 hours, 2–2.5 hours with feedback)**

Stakeholders assess progress against UNHCR objectives. Needs advance preparation – at latest the day before.

- Group LOI sectors beforehand into 5–6 sets of outputs, e.g. vocational training plus income generation;
- Highlight about 10 priority outputs per LOI grouping;

- Allow meeting to divide into 5–6 mixed groups by interest area;
- Give each group last year's LOI output sections;
- Ask each group to:
  - chart achievements against each set of LOI outputs;
  - state if outputs are "Not", "Partially", or "Fully" achieved, and why;
  - feedback from small groups to whole meeting (optional).

**Cost effectiveness (1.5–2 hours)**

For UNHCR staff only – figures require advance preparation. UNHCR has no cost-effectiveness method but this at least gets people thinking about alternative ways of using funds.

- Chart all the services provided to refugees, and by whom;
- Add budgets and outputs achieved/expected ;
- On separate line, record UNHCR administration costs;
- On separate line, estimate UNHCR staff costs;
- Organize discussions in small groups to:
  - compare costs and benefits of each service;
  - try "what if" calculations to see what happens if funds are transferred between services and between partners/UNHCR;
- Group feedback, discussion and record observations.

**Proposal ranking (Part 1: 30–45 minutes, Part 2: 60 minutes, Part 3: 30–45 minutes)**

For UNHCR staff only – use lists of proposals from "Developing Opportunities".

PART 1 – Participants prioritize each proposal, scoring from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

PART 2 – During a meal/evening break, ask some volunteers to:

- add up scores for each proposal;
- produce a ranking of proposals.

PART 3 – Feedback to participants the top 10 priorities. agree priorities for further detailed planning (in workshop or later).

**Action planning (2–2.5 hours)**

For UNHCR staff only – using the results of proposal ranking:

- Divide the top 10–12 proposals between 3–4 groups;
- For each priority proposal, groups chart:

- what exactly needs to be done;
- by whom;
- who in UNHCR will lead;
- any funding required;
- planned completion date.

(get this written clearly as these results will be used for future planning)

- Feedback from groups;
- Discussion.

# Annex 2 Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CEBS/C | Central Europe, Baltic States and Cyprus |
| COPs | Country Operations Plans |
| DOS | Division of Operational Support |
| DSA | Daily Subsistence Allowance |
| EPAU | Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit |
| HCR | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| LOI | Letter of Instruction |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OECD/DAC | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee |
| PCOS | Programme Coordination and Operational Support |
| PSE | Participatory Self Evaluation |
| Sitreps | Situation Reports |
| SPMR | Sub-Project Monitoring Report |
| SWOC | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Constraints |