

# Working with partners

## UNHCR's collaboration within the United Nations system

In 2005, UNHCR actively engaged in discussions on policy and implementation of the United Nations reform agenda, notably relating to peace and collective security; system-wide coherence; development; strengthening of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) system; humanitarian coordination with United Nations integrated missions; funding reforms; and response to internal displacement.

As part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), UNHCR contributed to inter-agency discussions on a number of operations such as the emergency response to the South Asia earthquake in Pakistan and Darfur/Sudan as well as on key policy issues. This involved active participation in the Humanitarian Response Review and consequent humanitarian reform initiatives, in particular the development of the cluster leadership approach. UNHCR was active in inter-agency early warning and response efforts, prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

In 2005, the IASC Principals reviewed and welcomed the establishment of the cluster leadership approach to strengthen humanitarian response and agreed to a phased implementation in three pilot countries (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Uganda). As designated global cluster lead for protection, emergency shelter, and camp coordination and camp management, UNHCR took on responsibility for coordinating predictable and effective inter-agency responses in these areas in situations of conflict-related displacement.

UNHCR collaborated with UNDP and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to strengthen the RC system by developing guidelines for RCs and United Nations Country Teams. Together with other IASC members, UNHCR worked on training and creating a pool of pre-certified, experienced HC candidates. The cluster leadership system represents an important step forward in improving the overall ability of the HC to manage humanitarian response by introducing predictability and accountability into the sectoral responses.

UNHCR focused its interventions in various UN-system and inter-agency meetings on ensuring that the Office's objectives were reflected in the respective decision-making processes. This included participation in or

contributions to the Chief Executives Board (CEB), the High Level Committees on Programmes and Management (HCLP and HCLM), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). UNHCR's office in New York took principal responsibility for following and reporting on the proceedings of the Executive Committee for Peace and Security (ECPS).

UNHCR remained an active member of the Geneva Migration Group, formed to promote cooperation on the asylum-migration nexus. The Group brought together the heads of IOM, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), OHCHR, ILO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to promote inter-agency collaboration on migration issues.

## Bilateral partnerships within the United Nations system

UNHCR stepped up its collaboration with UN agencies on a growing number of initiatives. These included the conclusion of headquarters-level agreements with FAO and UNV and strengthening of working relations with UNICEF and WFP.

Partnerships with development actors are essential to UNHCR's work of promoting durable solutions. The competence and experience of development organizations greatly contributes to UNHCR's humanitarian relief activities for refugees and other persons of concern.

UNHCR and ILO continued to use their respective relief, protection and development expertise to provide livelihood opportunities for refugees, returnees and IDPs, while contributing to social and economic development and improving living standards. A joint statement by the two Chief Executives was signed based on the ILO-UNHCR technical collaboration in 2004 (*UNHCR's Strategic Objective – SO 4.3.2*). Rapid deployments of technical experts to crisis-affected countries were made. Two ILO consultants with expertise on skills development were deployed to Benin and Kenya to complete the livelihoods and self-reliance component of the broader Strengthening Protection Capacity Project. The project aims to identify gaps in the protection of refugees through a consultative process, prioritizing the most appropriate measures to fill the gaps identified (*SO 3.2; Agenda for Protection - AfP 5.2.2*).

## Cooperation with WFP

In 2005, WFP and UNHCR strengthened their partnership by collaborating on a number of issues, providing food to refugees and combating malnutrition, especially among refugee children, and publicly appealed for support to the international community on several occasions. Joint letters and press releases requesting donors to help end ration cuts, mainly for refugees in Africa, resulted in donations to operations in eastern and southern Chad, Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. However, the situation in many protracted and emergency refugee situations such as southern Chad, Ecuador, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zambia remained precarious.



Democratic Republic of the Congo: Returnee children at Acobad transit centre, after receiving their food ration from WFP.  
*UNHCR / K. McKinsey*

In light of UNHCR's new role with internally displaced persons (IDPs), the two organizations worked to identify areas of collaboration. In the near future, a task force will be created to identify joint operational and policy issues requiring action in the short to medium term.

A joint UNHCR-WFP session on malnutrition was held during UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2005, to raise awareness on the global refugee nutritional situation and possible causes of malnutrition. A nutrition review of operations in Kenya and Ethiopia was undertaken in December 2005, in collaboration with both UNHCR and WFP Headquarters and country offices to improve the current nutrition interventions and support to the Field. Consequently, a joint plan of action to address food and nutrition concerns, self sufficiency, public health issues including water-sanitation and malaria prevention, was, at the time of writing, being prepared and will be presented to donors and other partners in the near future.

As part of the WFP-UNHCR joint work plan, three training sessions for the Joint Assessment Missions (JAM) were completed in 2005. The sessions, including one in French, aimed at standardizing and improving the quality of the assessments. A total of 96 people were trained (36 UNHCR staff, 35 WFP and 25 NGO and government partners).

The joint evaluation of the five pilot food distribution projects in Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia was completed in 2005. Although the report did not conclude that significant savings were achievable, both organizations agreed that the exercise had been very useful. It encouraged joint planning at the field level and helped balance protection concerns with resource shortfalls.

In several countries, organised voluntary repatriation operations were under way. WFP and UNHCR collaborated closely on the return of Burundian and Congolese refugees from camps in Tanzania and Rwandans from Burundi. Since April 2005, Burundi has been receiving an influx of Rwandan refugees originating from the southern provinces of Butare and Gikingoro partly due to food insecurity. In West Africa, the Liberian repatriation entered its promotion phase. As of December 2005, more than 322,000 IDPs and refugees in neighbouring countries had been assisted to return to their areas of origin.

Even before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in southern Sudan, refugees and IDPs started to return spontaneously from neighbouring countries and from within Sudan. Some 358,200 refugees had registered to return from seven countries of asylum by the end of October 2005.

In a number of WFP refugee-related operations, serious funding shortfalls caused a significant reduction in food rations. WFP and UNHCR tried to alert the international community through press statements and discussions with donors at country level, as well as organized joint press releases and donor briefings in Geneva. A joint letter with regard to food shortages for refugees was also sent to the Development Ministers of the European Union in October 2005.

The findings and recommendations in Kenya further helped in guiding the income generation and skills training activities to promote refugees' self-reliance. They also provided necessary building blocks for the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somalia, which focuses on durable solutions for Somali refugees, returnees and IDPs. Partnerships were also concluded in Eritrea (socio-economic reintegration), Burundi (reintegration in Ruyigi and Makanga), Liberia (reintegration), the Russian Federation (local integration of refugees and IDPs) and Sri Lanka (post-tsunami livelihoods), thus helping to achieve SO 7.4.2. ILO was an important partner in the drafting of UNHCR guidelines and handbooks related to self-reliance and durable solutions, and in training on micro-finance in conflict-affected communities.

During 2005, the partnership between UNHCR and **UNDP** was strengthened by focusing inter-agency cooperation in countries where returns are taking place, such as Burundi, DRC, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. High-level dialogue between the two organizations took place, and the possibility of undertaking joint programming in a number of countries was explored. (SO 4.3.2; SO 7.3)

The UNHCR-UNDP partnership was most evident within reintegration programmes, and the 4Rs (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) process piloted in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. The partnership was also evident in Liberia, where an MOU was developed as a basis for integrated



### International Year of Microcredit 2005

*“Microcredit is a critical anti-poverty tool - a wise investment in human capital. When the poorest, especially women, receive credit, they become economic actors with power. Power to improve not only their own lives but, in a widening circle of impact, the lives of their families, their communities, and their nations.”*

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, UN

The UN General Assembly designated 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit and invited governments, United Nations agencies, NGOs and others from civil society, the private sector and the media to jointly raise the profile and build the capacity of the microcredit and microfinance sectors. UNHCR launched the event by highlighting the Year on its website. Tools such as resource materials on microfinance and use of microcredits were made available to UNHCR staff, to enable refugees or returnees to become self-reliant. Training sessions were held in field offices and at Headquarters, so that staff could appropriately advise and monitor microfinance programmes in conflict-affected communities. The International Year of Microcredit provided UNHCR with further opportunities for cooperation and exchange of know-how with other UN agencies, in particular with ILO and UNDP as well as NGOs and other organizations.

Additional contributions helped boost microfinance projects, especially in the Americas region. UNHCR introduced additional credits to the existing modest microcredit schemes in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile to ensure a wider outreach to beneficiaries. In Chile, for example, schemes served as income opportunities for twice as many refugees as in previous years. As a result, new promising enterprises such as printing shops and cyber-café, seamstress shops or small shops selling handicrafts or clothes could be found in the markets. More diversified food products could be purchased at food markets from refugees who had started their own businesses. More importantly, the refugees in this region became resilient and better able to deal with everyday demands. (AfP 5.7.3)

Microcredit programmes within UNHCR operations have proven to be an effective tool for reducing vulnerability among refugees, increasing their self-reliance and improving prospects for sustainable reintegration and local integration. In many countries, the microcredit schemes were also linked to vocational skills training in areas that beneficiaries were interested in.

More information on the Year of the Microcredit can be found on the website:

[www.yearofmicrocredit.org](http://www.yearofmicrocredit.org)



Guinea: In many countries microcredit schemes are also linked to vocational training. Here, a group of women in a refugee camp learn tie-dyeing. This is a skill which they can use to start up small-scale businesses, as the traditional *batiks* are in high demand in local markets. *UNHCR / P. Mateu*



planning, joint assessments and joint programme implementation and monitoring. The 4Rs approach was fully integrated into UNDP's programmes in Somalia, thereby benefiting IDPs. In Sudan, a joint memorandum of understanding was drafted to ensure future cooperation on the 4Rs concept and the area-based and community-based approaches. Finally, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR and UNDP co-chaired the Thematic Group on Return and Reintegration for participatory assessments in major areas of return. UNHCR and UNDP also intend to sign a cooperation agreement governing their work in the DRC in the near future (SO 7.3, AfP 5.3.3). UNDP also contracted an independent expert to evaluate the 4Rs approach in the four pilot countries in 2005; the report will be available in 2006.

UNHCR and **FAO** continued to collaborate in joint needs assessments of agricultural relief and rehabilitation needs; joint programmes for reintegration operations, including the provision of agricultural inputs for returnees; promotion of food security for refugees; and information exchange (SO 7.3; AfP 5.3.3). A joint letter on strengthening cooperation between UNHCR and FAO was signed in 2005 to encourage partnership initiatives and tap into the existing potential for cooperation and link humanitarian assistance to medium and long-term development (SO 4.3.2).

## Collaboration with governmental organizations

In January 2005, UNHCR and the **German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)** signed a Joint Declaration of Intent which has served as the basis for development-oriented partnership operations. Under this arrangement, UNHCR and BMZ channelled EUR 28 million of funds through the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)** for operational activities in the following countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. The main focus of the partnership operations was on repatriation and reintegration activities. The benefits of this new UNHCR-BMZ-GTZ partnership go further than the co-funding scheme. It is expected that the closer co-operation will help in the implementation of durable solutions for refugees, returnees and IDPs, and produce synergies between humanitarian and development assistance.

The partnership between UNHCR and **the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** aims to build on synergies through field collaboration and exchange of experience. With the initiation of a staff exchange programme in 2001, both organizations are learning more about each other's competencies. The staff

exchange programme has assisted African Governments to develop and adopt strategic frameworks for responding to crises and for post-conflict recovery. Both organizations have assigned an expert to follow the sub-cluster on Humanitarian Response and Post-Conflict Recovery of the African Union's New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

Another aim of the partnership is to facilitate bilateral development assistance in returnee and refugee-hosting areas, particularly in jointly-identified priority countries. In 2005, this was evident in reintegration operations in Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Sudan, as well as in IDP-hosting areas in the Afghan province of Kandahar. Community development projects were also implemented in refugee-hosting areas in eastern Chad and Zambia (SO 5.1; 7.4; AfP 5.3.3).

The two organizations collaborated on the production of a JICA handbook as well as on the launch of a series of workshops on transitional assistance (SO 4.3.2; GSO 7.3).

## Working with NGOs

NGOs are an integral component of UNHCR's *modus operandi* with whom the Office continues to forge effective partnerships in order to achieve its core priorities of advocacy, providing protection and assistance, and finding durable solutions. In 2005, the Office channelled some USD 268.2 million – over one fifth of its annual budget – through partnerships with some 645 NGOs, of which 480 were national NGOs. More than 82 per cent of the funds channelled through NGOs covered seven main sectors: agency operational support; education; legal assistance/protection; health and nutrition; shelter and infrastructure; community services; and transport and logistics. It must be noted that UNHCR's resources cover only a part of refugee operations; the rest is met through resources provided by others, and UNHCR's NGO partners play a valuable role in this respect.

From March 2005, a core group of Geneva-based NGOs actively contributed to and helped shape UNHCR's revised *Policy on Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Urban Areas*. Field-based NGOs provided their input through workshops held in Beirut, Kampala and New Delhi. The policy and its operational framework will be finalized and issued in the first half of 2006.

As follow-up to a December 2003 retreat, UNHCR and operational and advocacy NGOs involved in protection activities met in July 2005 to discuss issues related to the strengthening of protection partnerships. A follow-up table was drawn up building on the High Commissioner's 2004 directive for the need to move beyond information exchange and to establish a mechanism that



Chad: After crossing the Nya river, refugees from the Central African Republic are transported to Amboko camp with the help of UNHCR and one of its partners. *UNHCR / B. Heger*

serves to strengthen partnerships in order to strengthen the overall capacity to provide protection; to involve NGOs in the design and implementation of operations; to discuss country-specific protection strategies; and to identify and clarify protection gaps.

NGOs played a role in UNHCR's Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, and contributed to the work of the core groups to the High Commissioner's Forum. In early 2005, UNHCR organized an expert round table on the civilian character of asylum and disarmament issues, which included NGOs, UN agencies and academic experts. Several consultations were organized with NGOs to discuss the evolving cluster approach to internal displacement. As cluster lead on protection, emergency shelter and camp coordination and camp management, UNHCR actively sought input from NGOs to map the existing capacities in each of these clusters. Bilateral consultations also took place with key NGO operational partners, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, to discuss formalized arrangements to facilitate cooperation in the delivery of protection in IDP operations.

UNHCR's Executive and Standing Committees continued to provide opportunities for substantive meetings between NGOs and UNHCR on refugee protection. During the week before the 56th session of the Executive Committee, in September 2005, some 300 representatives from 183 national and international NGOs, the United Nations and other international organizations met at the Annual Consultations with NGOs. The Consultations were based on three broad themes: new trends and issues in UNHCR-NGO partnerships; guaranteeing the right to seek asylum; and realizing refugee rights. The consultations addressed many complex issues at the core of refugee protection, as well as some of the long-standing issues faced in providing refugees with security, livelihoods and solutions. A special session, held in plenary,

discussed applying the ExCom Conclusion on Local Integration and gave examples of where local integration had worked successfully.

These consultations provided valuable insights and input to the joint NGO statements coordinated by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) at the ExCom plenary sessions. ExCom members have developed a keen interest in the Consultations, which is indicative of the depth and quality of the proceedings. National NGOs attending the Consultations brought their country perspective to the debate, and were able to network with the larger international NGOs and meet with the Directors and Heads of Desks of the respective Bureaux in order to discuss issues of mutual concern. Moreover, the national NGOs were able to participate in the drafting of and, in some cases, deliver NGO statements to ExCom.

In October 2005, the Office began to review its management of the sub-project agreement (grants management) process and the current levels of UNHCR's contribution to NGO headquarters' overhead and expatriate salaries. This review was in response to a survey undertaken by a group of UNHCR partners in the InterAction NGO consortium on gaps that existed in the process. Feedback was sought from international and national NGOs on UNHCR's management of NGO partnerships, and a comparative analysis of sister agencies, namely UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, on their grants management process and funding of partners' administrative costs was undertaken. The review will continue in 2006, aiming to reach conclusions by UNHCR's ExCom meeting in October 2006. In 2005, UNHCR methodology for age and gender mainstreaming was evaluated in eight of the 14 pilot countries. The methodology involved setting up multi-functional teams together with partners in each country and undertaking participatory assessments with refugee women, men, girls and boys.

During 2005, UNHCR maintained its standby arrangements with NGOs. The arrangements strengthened the Office's capacity to respond to emergencies through the deployment of qualified staff in the areas of refugee protection, resettlement, community services, field security, child protection, engineering, telecommunications, and other vital sectors. In July 2005, a three-month project was piloted in Jordan, Liberia, Malaysia and South Africa to strengthen UNHCR's capacity to manage partnership agreements with national NGOs implementing UNHCR programmes. The project produced tools to improve the processes that make up the UNHCR-NGO partnership.

The Protection Learning Programme was merged with the Office's internal learning programme and offered to both NGO partners and UNHCR staff in December 2005. In addition, partners could also participate in the Thematic Learning Programme on Migration. More information on UNHCR's partnership with NGOs can be found under the "Our Partners" page on the UNHCR website at [www.unhcr.org/partners](http://www.unhcr.org/partners).

## Engaging private companies in the refugee cause

Innovative partnerships with the corporate sector created powerful opportunities for UNHCR to help integrate refugees with local communities, improve self-reliance, increase job opportunities upon return to countries of origin and boost economic activity through microcredit initiatives for returnees and refugees. In 2005, for example, with the help of corporate partners, UNHCR improved health education in Tanzania by setting up mobile libraries; improved water delivery systems in Ethiopia; promoted sports and education programmes for Somali refugee girls in Kenya; and provided access to computer technology skills training for refugees.

In January 2005, the **UNHCR Council of Business Leaders** was launched by the Deputy High Commissioner at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos with UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie as the guest of honour. The role of the Council is to provide UNHCR with a network of business leaders to generate further private sector support and catalyze innovative public-private partnerships. UNHCR strengthened its partnership with senior executives from Merck, Microsoft, Nestlé, Nike, and PricewaterhouseCoopers who serve on the Council. UNHCR also has a five-year partnership with Statoil, and is engaged in a long-term partnership with Manpower, which shares the same vision of improving livelihood opportunities for the most disadvantaged as UNHCR. A first Council meeting was held in Geneva in May 2005 to explore ways of meeting UNHCR's needs. The first Council of Business Leaders mission to visit refugee camps in Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi took place in March 2006.

**Microsoft** and its partner companies have worked with UNHCR since 1999 and signed a partnership with UNHCR in 2003. Microsoft has responded to several complex humanitarian emergencies and global crises over the last decade through donations of cash, software, technology assistance, and volunteers. In 2005, as part of its *Unlimited Potential* programme, Microsoft provided financial, technical and material support to help establish Community Technology and Learning Centres (CTLCs) for refugees to access new sources of learning, so as to increase their standard of living and job prospects. The initiative is designed to help broaden the knowledge of information technology and aid global workforce development by providing technology skills. Following the success of a new CTLC in St. Petersburg in the Russian Federation, another CTLC will be established in Kanembwa refugee camp in Tanzania in the near future.

Partnership with **Nike** began in 2003 with a product donation to Kakuma and Dadaab camps in Kenya. In 2004, UNHCR and Nike launched the "Together for Girls" initiative in Dadaab for Somali refugee girls, using sports as a tool to promote girls' and young women's integration and retention in the educational system. The initiative was continued in 2005.

In 2003, UNHCR joined **Merck** and **the International Council of Nurses** in a joint project bringing mobile libraries containing health information to remote rural locations in Tanzania. In 2005, the project was expanded to Zambia and Merck has plans to fund the project across Africa by 2010. As improving refugee health is priority, Merck worked closely with UNHCR health specialists on HIV/AIDs prevention, care and treatment during the year.

Since 2000, **Statoil** has cooperated with UNHCR on activities ranging from improving education and health infrastructure to producing integration tools for refugee youth and for IDPs from Azerbaijan. In 2005, education activities and vocational training for refugee youth in Angola were supported by Statoil.

In 2005, UNHCR and **Manpower** engaged in a long-term partnership providing UNHCR with funds through the campaign "Give time for a life time". Manpower aims to raise a multi-million contribution annually by 2008. Through Manpower, UNHCR was invited to participate in the Business Consortium Trust and Leadership made up of managers and future leaders of Manpower, Cisco, Unilever, BT and leading academics of the "New World" of business. This provided UNHCR with an excellent opportunity to build longer-term relations with key multi-national companies with a potential to provide financial support.