

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

From its foundation in 1951, UNHCR has worked closely with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The growing involvement of NGOs in civil society, including in those areas closely linked to UNHCR's mandate, led to the PARinAC (Partnership in Action) Global Conference in Oslo in 1994. The Plan of Action adopted by the Conference became the framework for partnership activities. This framework seeks to:

- Increase NGO participation in dialogues with national authorities concerning refugee policies and programmes;
- Encourage early involvement of national NGOs in UNHCR's programmes, including support and training to build local capacity;
- Encourage closer co-ordination between UNHCR and NGOs and among NGOs themselves;
- Encourage greater involvement by local authorities, national NGOs and other UN agencies in finding lasting solutions to refugee problems; and
- Solicit closer attention to the needs of particularly vulnerable refugees and encourage refugees to be involved in designing and maintaining the programmes from which they benefit.

Activities

During 1999 UNHCR entered into project agreements with 544 NGOs (395 national and 149 international), to implement operational activities with refugees and other populations of concern to UNHCR. This compared favourably with 1998, when the 506 similar agreements were concluded. Agreements in 1999 represented USD 295 million.

Following a decision by the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom) in 1997, NGOs participated in Standing Committee meetings throughout 1999 as observers, and made several joint interventions. A record total of 156 NGOs registered as observers at the 1999 session of ExCom, demonstrating the unswerving commitment of NGOs to the cause of refugees.

The Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership (FAOP) was presented to NGOs at the Pre-ExCom consultations. The FAOP refers to the relationship between national and international NGOs, including the identification of national NGOs with whom they can work closely, and calls on international NGOs with local affiliates to support their activities and enhance their capacity.

Some 1,900 NGO staff attended UNHCR-organised workshops in 1999, although the total may, in fact, be much higher, since many training activities are initiated locally or in association with implementing partners. Training included protection, emergency management, programme management and security awareness.

PARinAC Process

UNHCR continued to promote the PARinAC process, aimed at enhancing the co-operation and co-ordination of activities in favour of refugees, including meetings on specific issues and through the three-day annual pre-ExCom UNHCR/NGO consultations. A total of 175 NGOs, including PARinAC Regional Focal Points and NGOs from developing countries attended the latter. The agenda included a general discussion between NGOs and the High Commissioner.

Regional PARinAC meetings for national NGOs took place during the year in Sri Lanka and Argentina. UNHCR/NGO regional recommendations were drawn up at these meetings.

Towards the end of 1999, a review of the PARinAC process and the Oslo Declaration was finalised and included a Plan of Action 2000. The review and Plan of Action are key elements of PARinAC and seek to revitalise the process in order to respond effectively to emerging challenges in the humanitarian field. The Plan calls for regional meetings of national NGOs, which will take place during the year 2000 in Central Asia, the Balkans, North Africa, Central Africa and Asia. A recommendation to train NGO Co-ordinators

to be on stand-by for emergencies was included in the Plan. An interactive PARinAC website will also be established during the year 2000.

Impact

UNHCR often sought the support of NGOs, many times at short notice. NGO involvement frequently

made the difference between failure and success. Besides “traditional” co-operation in emergency deployments or in technical areas, such as water or shelter, UNHCR and NGOs increasingly pooled their complementary expertise in the fields of protection, advocacy, social services and other sectors.

MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

In line with the UN Secretary-General’s reform process, UNHCR strengthened co-operation at the inter-agency level by participating actively in the various UN co-ordinating mechanisms, notably the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). The ACC serves as an important forum for communication and policy co-ordination among heads of UN agencies, contributing to improved understanding of the various opportunities and constraints facing the UN system. During the first half of 1999, the Kosovo emergency was discussed by almost all concerned UN co-ordination bodies, including the ACC. Briefings were provided by UNHCR on a regular basis. At the request of several Executive Heads, the Kosovo emergency was added to the list of items for discussion at ACC’s Spring Session, at which UNHCR’s lead agency role for co-ordinating relief to the refugees in the region was confirmed. The commitment of the UN system to work in a co-ordinated manner to address all aspects of the emergency was also confirmed at this session.

In contributing to a review of ACC mechanisms undertaken by a special Review Team and aimed at enhancing their role and functioning, UNHCR underscored the need for ACC to strengthen its advocacy role on behalf of the UN system. Moreover, UNHCR continued to promote the examination of the issue of staff security and safety within ACC and its subsidiary bodies and to co-ordinate security training through the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), designed to ensure a consistent approach. The Office also participated actively in the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Security, as well as in the two Task Forces on Policy and on Legal and Operational Issues convened by the Deputy Secretary-General in 1999 and is committed to complying with the agreements and recommendations of these bodies, notably in terms of insurance coverage and other administrative measures.

UNHCR’s co-operation with subsidiary bodies of ACC, focused on sector-specific, operational, admin-

istrative and programme questions. Discussions have resulted in various system-wide guidelines and recommendations that UNHCR has issued and distributed to its field offices.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which brings together representatives of UN and non-UN humanitarian agencies and organisations, has examined policy issues relating to humanitarian assistance, including the co-ordination of responses to complex emergencies. Several issues relating to field-level co-ordination were addressed through informal consultations within the IASC process, and other UN co-ordinating mechanisms such as the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and that for Peace and Security (ECPS). Through its participation in all these bodies, UNHCR contributed to reviewing country-specific situations and to discussions on more generic issues, including the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which was the subject of an important statement by the Secretary-General to the Security Council.

UNHCR also contributed to the work of various IASC Reference Groups, Sub-Working Groups and Task Forces established in recent years. Four of these bodies (two on internally displaced persons, one on assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States, and one on the Millennium initiatives) completed their respective tasks in 1999 and were discontinued.

Collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other IASC members focused on improving the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). Issues such as variability in funding, imbalances within the allocation of resources, underfunding of development activities and subsequent difficulties in bridging the “gap” from relief to development were all discussed with a view to finding viable solutions. During 2000, discussions will focus on ways to link the CAP with development management tools, such as the Common Country Assessment (CCA)

and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), as part of the joint efforts to address the difficult challenge posed by rebuilding war-torn societies following the humanitarian relief phase. Commitment to the CAP as a tool for effective and strategic humanitarian response was also reaffirmed.

Another inter-agency mechanism to which UNHCR contributed was the UN Development Group (UNDG), which discusses the Resident Co-ordinator system, the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In December 1999, UNHCR issued guidelines to field

OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The magnitude and complexity of major emergencies during 1999, notably in Kosovo and East Timor, emphasised the need for strong co-ordination. In the case of Kosovo, co-ordination was undermined by a marked preference for bilateralism and the competitive environment created by the high political stakes and unblinking media attention. OCHA seconded staff to UNHCR to support it in discharging its co-ordination functions. UNHCR also co-operated closely with the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in responding to the refugee crisis.

In East Timor, in addition to its mandated responsibilities of assisting the returnees, UNHCR was called upon to provide shelter in the initial recovery phase, under the overall co-ordination of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. There was

CO-OPERATION AGREEMENTS

Since 1952, more than 85 co-operation agreements of various forms have been signed, mostly in the form of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). These agreements can be global, regional or national in scope, and range from commitments to launch broad co-operation initiatives or to engage in intensive co-operation on specific issues. In 1999, several of these agreements were revised and new ones concluded.

At a country-specific level, an agreement was concluded with IOM for Migration in Croatia, addressing issues relating to Bosnian and Croatian refugees in several countries in the Balkans. Co-operation with WFP in

representatives on UNHCR's participation in the Resident Co-ordinator system, highlighting the potential of inter-agency development-management tools such as CCA and UNDAF. UNHCR is also an active participant in the CCA/UNDAF Learning Network, an informal system-wide UN group involved in reviewing and drawing lessons from the country-level CCA and UNDAF exercises.

UNHCR's key UN partners in providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to refugees included UNICEF, WFP, OCHA, UNDP and FAO. UNHCR also co-operated closely with the World Bank.

broad agreement within ECHA that planning needed to be joint and comprehensive, and to include the creation of co-ordination structures linking humanitarian and military operations during the deployment of the humanitarian force.

Another important area of inter-agency co-operation was to combine efforts on "transition issues", notably to bridge the gap between short-term humanitarian assistance and longer-term development activities in post-conflict countries. A joint initiative by the president of the World Bank and the High Commissioner led to the convening of roundtables involving a variety of interested actors, referred to as the Brookings Process. In July 1999, a plan of action was developed based on recommendations that emerged from those discussions. Its aim is to overcome institutional and funding gaps in countries emerging from conflict by engaging a wide range of interested parties to assist in rebuilding these war-torn societies and helping them along the path to sustainable development.

the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was likewise streamlined though an agreement concerning the storage, transport and distribution of food for internally displaced persons who had left Kosovo for Serbia and Montenegro. The MOU with UNDP for Rwanda was also reviewed, to focus on issues relating to the "gap" between relief and development. The agreement with UNDP regulated joint activities, ensuring a timely and smooth phase-out of UNHCR's humanitarian assistance to returnees. It also provides for a Joint Reintegration Programming Unit, composed of UNDP, UNHCR and WFP staff.

In the field of protection, UNHCR also signed an agreement in 1999 with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ) to jointly promote and encourage national systems for the identification, treatment and protection of asylum-seekers.

Several agreements bearing on staff exchange or secondments were reached in 1999. They included an agreement with the World Bank on a staff exchange programme, complementing the Framework for Co-operation signed in 1998. Similarly, an MOU was signed with the *Organisation Internationale de la*

Francophonie (OIF) whereby the latter will fund, recruit and deploy Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) from French-speaking countries and other members of OIF. Both these agreements are already being implemented on the ground. Emergency staffing and other stand-by arrangements were the subject of co-operation agreements signed with two international NGOs (the Danish Refugee Council and the Norwegian Refugee Councils) and with EMERCOM, the Russian state entity for civil defence, emergency response and disaster mitigation.

ANNUAL MEETINGS

Annual meetings are also a regular feature of UNHCR's co-operation with a number of key partners. In 1999 and early 2000, such meetings were held with IOM and WFP and afforded the opportunity for a detailed review of progress and of constraints experienced in the implementation of the respective co-operation agreements. The annual meeting with WFP was followed by a special meeting focusing on continuing difficulties in providing food to refugees in certain African countries. In the case of IOM, the issues of transport, resettlement, regional migration processes,

as well as operational challenges in East Timor and Kosovo were tackled in the annual meeting.

Annual meetings also took place with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to review common concerns and to exchange views on policies and operational modalities, notably operating principles in large-scale humanitarian crises and the relationship between humanitarian, political and military actors, in the light of the Kosovo experience.

